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JULY 1955 VOL. V, NO. 1

Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* IRVING KRISTOL

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This Month's *ENCOUNTER* :—

IS THE artist diviner and forerunner of new life? Or is he the eloquent victim whose sensibility reflects those acted-upon objects we have all become today? Or is he, perhaps, the victim who, diagnosing ills, also leads?

These questions are crude and over-simple, yet they echo in the mind. In various ways every poet and critic, and many common readers and onlookers, ask and try to answer them.

The wide divisions in contemporary "movements" in the arts can often be traced very directly to opposite responses to these questions. On the one hand, "the revolution of the word" shows a nostalgia for the idea, never quite lost, that society might be saved by the poetic: on the other hand, in times of discouragement we feel it probable that we "have the art we deserve." One kind of response is the absolute isolation of the individual artistic sensibility, and its opposite a desperate attempt to attach art to a spiritual or a materialist orthodoxy.

The apparent divisions between "realism" and "non-realism," which seem so irreconcilable, can be related if one sees that, after all, they have a common aim: to discover and state and maintain the position of art in an industrial society.

The polarities of opposite attitudes are no greater, after all, than those between any one individual's hope and despair. It would, in fact, be interesting to trace the history of any single article of faith of modern art passing through phases of optimism and pessimism. In liberal societies the individualistic and experimental art that was the great hope for a whole civilisation has become the vehicle of a nihilistic gesture. And in collective societies, social realism has come to express, under a strong mask, a profound realisation of the ineffectualness of the artist.

Sir Herbert Read's reflections on the exhibition of "Painters under 35" recently held under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Rome—and we hope, to be shown early next year in England—and the melancholy that pervades Professor D. W. Brogan's "Table Talk" for this month, bring such thoughts to mind.

Sir Herbert looks on the work of the young painters as "authentic symbols of chaos itself, of mind at the end of its tether, gazing into the pit on the other side of consciousness." It is, of course, easy to take this as meaning that, if we are living in times of chaos, art ought not to reflect, indeed it should resist, the chaotic. In an ultimate sense this is true, but Sir Herbert's point surely is that to deal with the contemporary world at all, the artist has to transform ultimates. That is to say, he has to go to the very end of chaos and resolve it if he can. If he cannot turn negative into positive, he must have the courage and honesty to confront us with negation that is truly ultimate. To express dissatisfaction is the first stage towards resolving its causes. Therefore, even if art is to some extent the product and reflection of a chaotic modern social situation, that does not mean that the poems and paintings which reflect this fact are in themselves a discouraging sign. They are a "journey to the end of the night," and it is from this end-point that a way back may be found. What is discouraging is a sterile sentimentality: whether this takes the form of a new academicism or a superficial realism.

Mr. Brogan confronts us with the same problem on a more material plane: the question of literature being superseded by what is called in UNESCO jargon "mass media." Perhaps, though, if one follows Mr. Brogan's nightmare to its particular end, we find cause for encouragement. True, the written and printed word may soon be conquered by the visual image on the television screen and in the "comics." But the process and conquest need not end there. Already there are signs that the spoken word—on long-playing records and on tape—may finally win out over the recorded image. And when this

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happens, we shall have gone back to the bardic stage where literature began. The sight and sound of Mr. Emlyn Williams as the young Dylan Thomas, or of the Harvard Poets' Theatre performing *Finnegans Wake*, should make us reflect that a good deal of modern literature that seems abstruse in print may spring to life on the tongue of troubadours. Art moves hiddenly: and who knows but that Henry James, and James Joyce and Dylan Thomas, may not find their final fulfilment in being spoken?

One thing is certain, though. The artistic process cannot rest at the point where it is *only* a passive reflection or expression of circumstances acting upon the artist's or poet's sensibility. Art begins where there is, not just reception, but also organisation of received material. For this reason, we can be sure that mere gestures of brushes on canvas are only a phase, and in this they have something in common with an opposite form of modern painting—the representational "kitchen sink" canvas. At the beginning of this century we developed one great period of modern art. Today we are traversing an interval during which new subject-matter is being absorbed.

● We had originally intended to publish Isaiah Berlin's Northcliffe Lectures in "A Marvellous Decade" in consecutive issues of Encounter. For various reasons, however, this has turned out to be impracticable, and we shall have to postpone the remaining lectures until the autumn. Fortunately, each lecture makes an independent unit, and will not suffer from this change in plans.

● We regret having failed to mention in our last number that the line drawings that illustrated the Kingsley Amis story were by George Fairley.

Notes on other Contributors:—

Denis Healey is Labour Member of Parliament for East Leeds. He was formerly Secretary of the International Department of the Labour Party. . . . Edmund Wilson has earned an undisputed place as the leading literary critic in the U.S. Several of his books of criticism (*To the Finland Station*, 1941; *Classics and Commercials*, 1951; *The Shores of Light*, 1952) have been published in this country by W. H. Allen. . . . F. R. Allemann is correspondent in Bonn for the Swiss newspaper, *Die Tat*. . . . Philip O'Connor has contributed poetry and sketches to various literary periodicals. . . . Francis Watson, author, broadcaster and journalist, is at present writing a book on his travels in India, which will be published next year. . . . Peregrine Worsthorne contributed the article, "America: Conscience or Shield?" to our November issue. . . . David Hawkes is lecturer in Chinese at Oxford University.

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Denis Healey

The Bomb that Didn't Go Off

Limitations of the Atomic "Deterrent"

NOTHING in politics paralyses thought quite so quickly as a really striking image—especially when that image has the Churchillian prestige behind it. How many Allied servicemen, as they inched their way up Italy's rocky spine, have cursed that memorable phrase, "the soft underbelly of Europe." And because no other man seemed great enough to match the hugeness of the H-bomb the Western world fell gratefully on Sir Winston Churchill's aphorism, in the defence debate last March, that "safety is the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation."

The idea that we are entering an age when the threat of thermonuclear retaliation will by itself deter aggression, has been accepted almost without discussion in the West. It has, moreover, been accepted in the face of a good deal of evidence that the "threat" is not a threat, and the "deterrent" not a deterrent at all. What passes for stark political realism—this picture of a world at peace because each protagonist has a gun pointed at the other's heart—looks after study of the evidence disturbingly like an exercise in self-deception.

For years after the defeat of Hitler, the Western world accepted Churchill's confident assertion that America's superiority in atomic weapons would deter the Communist camp from using its superiority in conventional forces for an act of overt aggression. In June 1950, that confidence was proved mistaken: the Communists invaded South Korea. And in the following winter their gamble looked like succeeding. The United Nations decided, in effect, they would risk the loss of Korea if it should prove impossible to win the war without using atomic weapons or attacking China itself. The full meaning of their decision was never demonstrated in practice; but the bearing of that decision cannot have been lost on the Communists.

America justified this decision by claiming that MacArthur's strategy would have meant a war in the wrong place at the wrong time. European opposition to MacArthurism was based primarily on the fear that Russia might be brought into the fighting, and that this would mean the swift occupation of Europe by the Red Army. Rather than take those risks, America and Europe joined to condemn millions of Koreans to the agony of a prolonged and indecisive conventional war, in which the West never used the full weight of its available weapons. I am sure this decision was correct. But it inevitably weakened the force of the atomic deterrent by indicating that aggression would not be met automatically by atomic retaliation. Indeed, it compelled NATO to contemplate the task of building in Western Europe a conventional army strong enough to repulse any military aggression short of a full-scale invasion by the

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Red Army. Once the Korean war was over, however, a Republican Congress began complaining about the cost of America's contribution towards a conventional deterrent; and the main danger of Communist aggression appeared in parts of Asia where there was no early prospect of building conventional defences. With cries of "a bigger bang for the buck," Mr. Dulles revived the atomic deterrent under the slogan of "massive retaliation."

But once again, the atomic deterrent failed to stop the Communists: at Dien Bien Phu, they called the American bluff. A year later, America made a further attempt to invoke the atomic deterrent with ambiguous threats over Matsu and Quemoy: again her nerve broke before that of the Communists.

ARGUMENT will continue about what would have happened in all these cases if America had persisted to the point of making good her threats. But it cannot be denied that the deterrent value of atomic striking-power has seriously depreciated through the West's proved reluctance to employ it. From the experience of the last five years, it would appear that a general threat of atomic retaliation may well invite the Communists to probe Western intentions by local military adventures. So far, no such Communist experiment has provoked atomic counteraction.

The only certain conclusion to be drawn from past events is that the West was most reluctant to use atomic weapons even when it had overwhelming superiority in them. Throughout this period, America's superiority in atomic striking-power was scarcely challenged. She had a much larger stock of A-bombs than the Soviet Union. She alone had bombers capable of transatlantic return flights. And she had a network of bomber bases widely dispersed in depth all round the frontiers of the Soviet Empire. All these advantages have been reduced by the invention of the H-bomb.

Since America has for some time had the power to destroy all major industrial targets in the U.S.S.R. with A-bombs, the H-bomb does not effectively increase her striking-power. On the other hand, by turning their A-bombs into H-bombs—a comparatively cheap and easy process once the secret has been mastered—the Russians may shortly reach equivalent striking-power against the United States. When one H-bomb dropped in New York harbour—or even exploded there inside the hull of a neutral merchant ship—might conceivably stop industrial production along a good part of the East Coast, Russia's shortage of bombers and bases is of little significance.

Moreover, it is probable that a society with the delicate economic and social structure required to support a high standard of living is far more vulnerable to H-bombs than a backward peasant country. Perhaps, too, a dictatorship can retain the essential administrative controls more easily than a democracy under such conditions of total war. Certainly of all the great powers, America is likely to lose most and China least by initiating total thermonuclear war.

Whether or not these considerations fully apply today, no one can deny that within ten years the atomic striking-power of the two camps will have reached "saturation" point. New methods of delivering H-bombs, in missiles which can be fired across the Atlantic or from the decks of submarines, are likely to wipe out whatever advantages the West now possesses in air power. So far as can be foreseen, the inventions now under development for delivering thermonuclear weapons will tend to strengthen attack rather than defence, and to consolidate the predicament in which, though each side can annihilate the other's cities, neither can hope to destroy the other's power of retaliating in kind.

The suicidal implications of thermonuclear attack are multiplied by the danger that if hundreds of H-bombs were exploded in a war, radiological contamination of the earth's atmosphere would produce lasting genetic damage to mankind as a whole. We are fast approaching a situation in which the use of thermonuclear weapons against an enemy who also possesses them means suicide not

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only for their user but for humanity in general. The question posed by Korea and Dien Bien Phu arises with redoubled force. Will any power in fact use its thermonuclear weapons, except in the last extremity when its own survival is unequivocally at stake? Or, to put it more positively: can the West afford to put itself in the position where its only effective reaction to a major military advance by Communism means self-destruction?

I HAVE posed this question in terms of political self-interest. But there is a moral issue too. The case of the democracies in the Cold War rests—at least in part—on their respect for human values. Already the West's dependence on indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction has been a valuable—and valid—asset to Communist propaganda, particularly in Asia. In the approaching atomic stalemate, to rely on a deterrent that will bring the maximum of suffering to all mankind is immoral as well as inexpedient. The West cannot afford to stake humanity's survival on a gambler's "all-or-nothing" throw.

So far as Asia is concerned, the West has already abandoned the slogan of massive retaliation. Partly because the use of thermonuclear weapons would drive the Colombo powers into the Communist camp, partly because there is little military scope for them, the West seems agreed to seek security in Asia by other means. But it is still assumed that in Europe the outbreak of a major war must bring the use of H-bombs by the West, even if the Communist side at first restricted itself to other weapons. While this assumption made some kind of sense so long as America could deploy a near-monopoly of atomic striking-power from her privileged sanctuary beyond the oceans, it is far less plausible as "saturation" approaches. If, in 1951, Europeans were prepared to abandon South Korea rather than risk being themselves occupied by the Red Army, how can we take it for granted that in, say, 1961, Americans would not prefer to see Europe occupied by the Red Army rather than themselves risk thermonuclear annihilation?

In other words, the possession of thermonuclear weapons by either side may well be an effective deterrent against their use by the other. And for this very reason, they *cease* to be a deterrent against aggression with conventional forces—at least when such aggression does not directly threaten the very survival of a power with thermonuclear weapons.

If this is a reasonable inference to draw from the atomic stalemate, it has important strategic and diplomatic implications, above all for Europe. In the first place, America's monopoly of the West's thermonuclear striking-power gives her allies no sure protection against Soviet H-bombs. They can achieve this security only by producing their own H-bombs and the means to deliver them, or by obtaining a share of America's thermonuclear striking-power. It is an immense weakness in NATO that the thermonuclear deterrent is at present vested entirely in the Strategic Air Command—and the SAC is responsible to no one but the American President. Considering the overwhelming importance given to the atomic deterrent by official NATO policy, it is astonishing that none of America's allies has dared even to discuss this problem in public. For, on their own admission, they are basing their survival on a factor which is entirely beyond their control. And whether the U.S. President himself has adequate control over SAC is regarded by some as an open question.

But in any case, is it in the interest of America's European allies that NATO should base its planning on the use of thermonuclear weapons? Europe is very much more vulnerable to such weapons than either the U.S.A. or the U.S.S.R. And so long as their use is assumed to be inevitable in a major European war, there is, as Liddell Hart has pointed out, little incentive for Europe to make the peacetime sacrifices involved in building the large land army which NATO now demands. There are signs that Western Europe is slowly slipping into the sort of apathy about defence in which neutralism breeds. If the H-bomb is really a deterrent, it lies outside the control of NATO altogether.

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And if the deterrent fails, Europe is condemned either to occupation by the Red Army or to thermonuclear annihilation or both. So why not relax and leave the thermonuclear powers to work out the problem by themselves? Whereas five years ago Europe was fighting desperately to stem the American trend towards a peripheral atomic strategy, today it is turning more and more towards the vision of peripheral atomic guarantees for its own neutrality—Sir John Slessor's "atomic Locarno." For the first time since 1945, Soviet diplomacy has found a theme which stirs an echo in the Western capitals.

Yet the brutal fact is that if Western Europe once abandons the search for local security in favour of a peripheral atomic deterrent, the deterrent will lose whatever force it does possess. While it is at least conceivable that America might risk her own destruction for the sake of helping European allies on whose soil her own G.I.s were fighting, it is hard to believe that she would do so for the sake of helping neutral peoples in whose survival her interests were only indirectly involved. Thus, any form of European neutrality which meant the withdrawal of American soldiers from the Continent would invite Russia to nibble Europe to death. And besides the probability of occupation by the Red Army, Europe would then face the possibility of bombing by the SAC whenever America decided that she must call a halt.

BUT is there any policy for Western defence which does not entail the use of weapons which would be self-destructive? Can the Communist armies be contained within their present frontiers unless the West depends on bombs which it may be afraid to use? If there was ever any real prospect of matching the Communists man for man, it has disappeared now that six hundred million Chinese are added to the three hundred million of the Russian Empire. Besides outnumbering the combined NATO peoples by over two to one, the Communist bloc has a much lower standard of living and dying. It can put soldiers in the field at a fraction of the Western cost, and it can dispense with many of the non-combatant services which make the Western armies' "tail" so much larger than their "teeth." Is there any way of compensating for this inferiority without recourse to the H-bomb?

Published information about the so-called "tactical" atomic weapons suggests that they may provide the answer. Such weapons have not so far been tested on a large scale, so caution is required in generalising about their strategic implications. Though presumably all require at least the critical mass of an atomic explosive—about the size of a tennis ball—some are small enough to be fired in a four-inch shell, while their explosive force goes as low as 3,000 tons of TNT, compared with the 20,000 tons of the first A-bombs and the fourteen million tons of the first H-bombs. They are thus well suited for employment against all types of military targets, and with less danger to civilians than the "strategic bombing" of the last world war. Moreover, since they have maximum effect in air-burst, there is no "fall-out," and radiological contamination of the atmosphere is less than one-thousandth that of a single hydrogen bomb.

An army equipped with tactical atomic weapons should be able to hold up an enemy many times its own size. And on a limited front like that of Central Europe, there may well be a maximum size beyond which an army's vulnerability to such weapons increases much faster than its striking power. The use of such weapons by both sides would require a revolution in present patterns of organisation and equipment in favour of small mobile formations comparatively independent of land supply. The West should be able to produce forces which more nearly matched the Russian in the relation between their cost and fighting power, while the Russians would be unable to mass the heavy concentrations of troops which is their trump card at present. Tactical atomic weapons have the supreme advantage for the Western side that—exactly the opposite of thermonuclear weapons—they give defence a clear advantage over attack.

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There is thus a strong case for basing NATO defence policy not on the H-bomb, but on so-called conventional forces with atomic arms. This policy would work, however, only if the West deliberately aimed at restricting war to the military targets in the theatre of the land fighting: otherwise it would be difficult to prevent a rapid transition to the indiscriminate use of thermonuclear weapons against enemy cities. Such a restriction is by no means out of the question. Until the Twentieth Century it was the rule rather than the exception throughout history. And it may now become the rule again. In all the fighting which has so far taken place from Greece to Formosa, the protagonists have taken exceptional pains to avoid the unnecessary extension of a local conflict. So long as the use of thermonuclear weapons against enemy cities means self-destruction, both sides are likely to avoid this except in the last extremity, if they are given any chance of doing so. Here, unilateral declarations of intent might well lead to multilateral conventions to limit the horrors of modern war.

IT WOULD still be essential for the West to maintain its thermonuclear striking-power, not only to be able to retaliate against thermonuclear aggression by the Communists, but also as the ultimate weapon if other methods failed to halt the Red Army. But a serious attempt to provide for the defence of Western Europe without dependence on H-bombs would reduce the ambiguities of present Western policy. There would be much less danger that, once atomic "saturation" approaches, the Communists might gamble on America's unwillingness to risk her own destruction in order to prevent local advances. And if a local incident occurred, there would be time for diplomacy to operate before the spark produced a general holocaust. Above all, such a strategy would make sense for America's European allies, as reliance on the thermonuclear deterrent does not.

There are signs that America is groping towards such a concept in the current discussion about "measured retaliation." Oddly enough, this time it is the British who seem so hypnotised by slogans that they are unwilling to work out the implications of their attitude. Of course, the great obstacle to realism about defence is the cost which a realistic policy would impose. There is, in fact, no escape from the conclusion that in order to minimise the risk of general war, the West must maintain some strength in every mode of warfare. We must be able to show the Communists that we can match them in any mode of aggression which they may choose—that our will to resist is absolute, since the cost of our resistance can always be related to the magnitude of the issues at stake. And if strategy imposes the need for a variety of weapons, economics imposes the need for international specialisation to reduce their cost. It is in the development of organic intercontinental defence through NATO that strategy must be reconciled with economics.

Because the cost of thermonuclear retaliation is so much greater than the value of any local territory that may be lost, the thermonuclear deterrent is of only limited application. In defence as in diplomacy there are no magic formulas, and every type of aggression requires its own deterrent.

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Edmund Wilson

Comrade Prince

A Memoir of D. S. Mirsky

D. S. MIRSKY, the brilliant Russian critic and historian, disappeared in the later thirties, at the time of the Stalin purges. His career bridged the literary worlds of two mutually exclusive societies—that of England and Western Europe and that of the Soviet Union—and, as a consequence of this anomalous situation, his work (in French, English, and Russian) has never been done justice as a whole, let alone collected, nor has, so far as I know, any biographical memoir been written of him. When his story is eventually told, it will be a curious one, of much interest as a document on our period. He was a gifted and heroic person, and his fate was one of the tragedies of the Stalin dictatorship. There is not, at the present time, anyone qualified to tell this whole story; but I should like to put on record my memories of him as I knew him in Soviet Russia, where I spent the summer of 1935.

I looked Mirsky up in Moscow not long after my arrival. I knew that he had read my work from his having said something about it in an article in some French periodical, and I had just read, on my way to Europe, his books on Pushkin and Lenin. The first of these had made an impression on me, for Mirsky's literary sense was highly developed and he was very sure of his judgements. His discussion of Pushkin's style was the first thing I had ever read that made me realise that a Russian could be a great stylist—such reading of Russian writers as I had hitherto done had been mostly in Constance Garnett's translations, which made them all sound much alike; and I had been stimulated by Mirsky's book seriously to study Russian. His two-volume history of Russian literature, written like the *Pushkin* in the middle twenties, I did not yet know at that time; but I later came to recognise it as a unique and indispensable work. Russians tell me that—in spite of the fact that this book was written in English for foreigners—there is nothing in Russian so good, so perceptive and comprehensive. Though a number of books on Russian literature, both by foreigners and by Russians, have recently been published in English, Mirsky's history and Vogüé's *Le Roman Russe* remain, so far as my experience goes, the only works that make a real liaison between the literature of the West and Russian, because they are the only ones whose authors are at home in both worlds and have at the same time a grasp of the literary art.

I also knew something of the circumstances of Mirsky's returning to Russia. Though a member of an ancient princely family and an ex-officer of the Tsarist army, who had fought with Denikin and Wrangel against the Revolution, he had, in exile, while living in London, become converted to Marxism. He was a protégé of Maurice Baring, who had known him in his Petersburg days, and

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he had been supporting himself in London by various academic and literary jobs. Among these, about 1930, he had undertaken a short book on Lenin. This is not one of his most satisfactory productions, for he was limited to such materials as he could find in the British Museum, which must have been rather meagre, since he was not, as I found, aware of such an important fact as that Lenin's maternal family was German; but it is said to have been his researches in connection with this book that first interested him in Communism and enabled him to understand sympathetically the events that had resulted in the Bolshevik revolution. The economic crisis of 1930–1 seemed to confirm for him the Marxist prediction of the inevitable breakdown of capitalism, and the Soviet Union, still at that time identified with its founder Lenin, presented itself to Mirsky as the only modern state not based on decaying foundations. To the horror of his fellow émigrés, he enrolled himself in the British Communist Party, and he decided that the part of a patriot as well as that of a Marxist was to return to his native country. This he managed, in 1932, through the aid of his friend Maxim Gorky, who had gone back in 1929.

THE price that Mirsky paid for admission was the usual repudiation of non-Communist associations which was always exacted by the Bolsheviks of recruits from other groups, and this took the form of a book called *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain*, first published in Russian in the Soviet Union, then (in 1935) brought out in an English translation. This book was, of course, not calculated to please the English themselves, and it has usually been treated as an abject betrayal of the writers who had befriended Mirsky in England, an exercise in propaganda that marked his extinction as a serious critic. Yet this bold and brisk Marxist summary of the modern intellectual history of Britain and the United States (for he polishes us off at the same sitting) is rather an able and brilliant book. It is today less annoying than pathetic to read a critic who believes that he has got the key to all the problems of human culture as well as an infallible ferrule with which he can poke into their places all the practitioners of bourgeois letters. It is a procedure, a state of mind, that is sure to give rise to absurdities. All the popular pastimes of England—from "chapel prayer meetings" to liquor, the cinema, betting on the races, and "the commercial spectacular development of football, cricket, and tennis"—are, for example, put down by Mirsky to the devious cunning of the capitalists in procuring "the stupefaction of the masses" by "canalising" their emotional energy and diverting them from revolution. And in the cocky exhilaration that has followed his first whiffs of Marxism, he does not hesitate to brush off with a flick of the wrist —in a way that he would never have permitted himself in his earlier more scholarly days—writers he has hardly read. We are told, for example, of Henry James that his residence in England had "given full vent to his minutious analysis of the most inconceivably petty incidents"—though I know, from my conversations with Mirsky, that he had read only one book of James, *The Ambassadors*.

Yet there are very good things in this ill-inspired book. I am not sure that there is any other in which a foreigner so well-informed has attempted in so uninhibited and so unacademic a way to run through the main currents and figures of recent English literature and thought. The categories and conventions of Marxism do, of course, by themselves impose a constraint, but the book was produced at a time when the culture-crushing hand of the Kremlin had not yet put the critic in irons, and it is full of original insights of the social-economic kind and of descriptions of literary milieux which do not necessarily depend on these. He is very good, it seems to me, on Bloomsbury, and on the difference between what constituted being "advanced" in the Bloomsbury generation and what constituted being "advanced" in the Wells and Shaw generation. Mirsky's delight in, his appetite for good literature is still partially able to express itself, as when he calls Virginia Woolf "a great writer" or Conrad "a

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great psychologist." His comparisons of English philosophy with the systems of Germany and France are illuminating and quite independent of the Communist frame of reference.

The preface to Mirsky's book on Lenin contains his apologia for his shift of allegiance to the Soviet power. It has been pointed out to him, he says, that his book needs some special explanation as "coming from a member of the class that was most effectively eliminated" by the Bolsheviks. The answer is, then, in the first place, that the Russian "squirearchy"—it should not, he says, be called an "aristocracy"—"had reached such a state of cultural degeneracy that the mere fact of possessing a certain amount of intellectual culture 'unclassed' those of its members who possessed any," and that these had had no reason to be prejudiced in favour of the bourgeoisie "by the unsolicited opportunity of seeing European capitalism not as guests, but as subjects, not as more or less moneyed tourists, but as more or less unemployed proletarians." Such people—a minority—could not be content to live on old memories, as many did, or "amalgamate on a basis of inferiority with the middle classes of Europe." This last point, I think, was important. Mirsky's full name was Svyatopolk-Mirsky, and his lineage was that of the earliest rulers, the Svyatopolks and Gedemins, when Kiev and Novgorod were dominant principalities; and my impression of him was that—for all his talk of a simple "squirearchy"—he was, at bottom, a terrific snob of the peculiar Russian kind that prides itself on its descent from the Ruriks, regards the Romanovs as upstarts, and, still keeping something in its bones of the old barbaric overlordship, is not necessarily revolted by Stalin. I found it quite comprehensible—given Mirsky's force of intellect, his love of Russia, and his self-identification with her destiny—that, ignoring Western conventions, he should stride from the arrogance of the prince to that of the commissar: they had in common their contempt for the bourgeoisie, their refusal to accept solidarity with it. It was enough, as he goes on to say, for such a person as he, to recognise, in any case, that, "whatever the Communists might be worth in their international function, as a Russian party they had preserved the independence of the country from foreign intervention, restored under a new name . . . the geographical limits of the empire, and made Russia a cultural and political force of universal significance. Before we became internationalists, we had come to understand that, whatever else they might be, the Communists who had vindicated the independence of a Workers' and Peasants' U.S.S.R. were better patriots than the 'national Russians' who had allied themselves with foreign imperialism in return for help against their class enemy." That he had never accepted the Tsar with anything like conventional loyalty is shown by a pre-revolutionary anecdote. He is supposed to have caused scandal in his regiment by refusing to drink to the sovereign, remarking, according to one version of the story, "I never drink to people that I do not know," and, in another cruder version, "I refuse to drink to that idiot."

In any case, having reached these conclusions, he proceeded to act upon them—as Russian intellectuals did not always do—and he was thus a unique figure, the strangest and one of the most interesting that I met in the Soviet Union. He was the only one of his breed that I have seen on his native ground, and as we dined in the Sokolniki Gardens, and he would comment on an expansive and very *soignée* white beard as a relic of the old régime, or point out, as we walked at night behind the Kremlin wall, the scene of one of the episodes of *War and Peace*, or talk about current events outside Russia in a curious Russo-centric way as if they were all peripheral, as if Europe was going to wreck while only the Kremlin remained (he rarely read foreign periodicals, he made a point of telling me, and did not miss them at all), I felt that I had, indeed, come in contact with a permanent Russia, that not merely was *War and Peace* not far behind us there in the background, but that Kiev and Novgorod and the Golden Horde (from whom he must have got his Tartar eyes) were not entirely remote.

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I felt the survival in Mirsky's mind of a Russia that continued through all her vicissitudes; but I was not always sure that Moscow, as he had come so positively to hold, was absolutely in advance of the rest of the world. There were moments when I was worried by the medieval aspects of the Soviet power. It was odd, it was quite uncanny to hear the tune of the *International* played at midnight on the Kremlin bells; if I had not been told about it, I should never have recognised it—so out of our rhythm it seemed, indecisively and haltingly jingled, so out of our scale, in fact—unless it were simply out of tune; and there was perhaps a little of that, for all his knowledge of the western world, about Mirsky's way of playing it.

I FOUND Mirsky, when I first went to call on him, in antique and rather shabby surroundings at the extreme other end of Moscow from the hotel in which I was living, the main shops, and the government buildings. When Moscow was not brand new, it had nothing in common with anything as disciplined and modern as Communism was supposed to be. Almost anything might lurk in those neglected old houses, and a good many queer things did. I heard stories of outlandish religious cults, spiritualistic seances, dens of gangsters, and houses of prostitution. This seemed to me the kind of quarter where such things could be expected. The address I had took me, I found, through a dark and narrow passage that was cluttered by a secondhand bookstall. I came out into a cobbled court where the walls had once been painted pink, and had to penetrate beyond that to a second one, in which they had been painted white. I located Mirsky's door on the stairway of one of the entrances. It was covered—I supposed, for warmth—by what I took to be a piece of old carpet. This muted my attempt to knock, so I tried turning the bell, which did not seem to ring. Though he had made an appointment with me, I decided he had not yet come in, so went away to kill time for an hour by visiting the Museum of the Revolution, which was not very far away. When I returned, I worked the bell in the other direction, and this time I heard it ring. The door was opened, and I saw before me, standing immobile and very erect, a tall, bearded, bald, and bespectacled man who stared at me without shaking hands. He invited me in, however, and apologised for receiving me in his dressing-gown, in which, he said, he always worked.

In appearance, he had something of Kropotkin, something of Edward Lear. His large and glowing brown eyes had a pronounced oriental slant that was particularly noticeable in profile, and he would knit his dark bushy eyebrows, when vexed or perplexed about something, in a way that suggested the frown of a tsar; but his gaze was more often quite friendly and straight. He had a high intellectual forehead, with a large brown mole on one side of the crown. As in the case of many Russian émigrés, his teeth were in hideous condition. He was stiff and seemed rather shy, but I guessed that the constraint of our conversation was due to the difficulty of adapting himself to a visitor from the outside world, and one whom he did not know. He invited me to dinner for the following night, and, this arranged, since our talk seemed so halting and I thought he wanted to go back to his work, I got up to take my leave; but he checked me and made me sit down. He said he was in no hurry, enquired whether I was in a hurry, and apologised again for his dressing-gown. There was an unmade bed in the background, and a door stood open on a bathtub which was also made to serve as a washstand. When I came there the next evening, he complained that the soap smelt badly. I learned later that, returning to Russia, he had insisted on only one thing: that he should have a room to himself.

He told me now that he had been revising an old translation of Milton, and that the speeches of God the Father were "an awful bore." A flat and explicit atheism was a part of his Marxist stand, and when I mentioned T. S. Eliot, whom I knew he had known in London, he made fun of Eliot's play *The Rock*, written to raise funds for the London churches, and of his having said, in some connection, that family prayers were important

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because they were good for the servants. I tried talking about the Museum of the Revolution, but this brought little response, except for his asking me whether I was able to read "the letterpress"—and we were stalled in one of our silences. I said that I had come to Moscow by way of Leningrad, and he asked me whom I had seen there. It was always very important in the Soviet Union in those days to know whom people had seen, since everybody had to be identified with something—some milieu, movement or group—other than his own individuality. I had met, during my stopover in Leningrad, a pale and very young man, who was an instructor in Methodology at the Naval Academy. He was cultivated in every language on every conceivable subject and had been reading Donne's poetry to the sailors, who, he said, were crazy about it. He had told about a poem by a Russian—written, he said, "partly under French, partly under German influence"—which invested the raising of Lazarus with homosexual suggestions. I had asked him for a list of the living Russian poets that he considered most worth reading, and he had immediately written me one. I now showed this list to Mirsky and asked for his opinion of the poets. He looked at it, handed it back, and announced with a certain sternness, contracting his heavy eyebrows, "Almost every one of those poets is homosexual." I knew that there had just been promulgated an edict against homosexuality, imposing severe penalties, and I resolved to destroy the list; but this again stopped the conversation.

I made, however, a last effort to stimulate it by telling him about seeing in Leningrad Alexey Tolstoy's play *Peter First*. This was a glorification of Stalin in the role of Peter the Great. Sergei Kirov, the popular and liberal president of the Leningrad Soviet, had been murdered the December before—as was said, at the order of Stalin, who had seen in him a formidable rival; and the play was an apologia for the trials and executions which had followed—aimed especially at the Leningrad intelligentsia, who still lived up to an old tradition by maintaining a snooty attitude toward Moscow. "Ah, you saw that?" he said with some interest. "I suppose it will be done here," I ventured. "I don't think so," he answered laconically, but looked at me with a gravity that seemed just to stop short of the quizzical. He volunteered, however, no explanation; I did not dare ask him for one; and I still do not know what the point was. Every novel, play, and poem in Russia seemed to have some political implication. We were stalled again, and I left.

THE next evening, when I went to dinner, I found a professional linguist, who had had his head shaved in the Soviet style, and a Jewish woman, who did translating. We had pressed caviare—cheaper than the regular kind—black bread, and the little Russian cucumbers that you peel and dip in salt. (A friend who knew Mirsky in Paris has told me that he was then a gourmet, who delighted in the best restaurants.) After dinner, a Russian girl who spoke French and was writing an article on *"poètes de café,"* came in to take tea. In the course of the conversation, Mirsky, speaking of Gorky, said that he had become in the Soviet Union *"une manière de personnage,"* and, turning to the French specialist, quizzed her: "Who said that of whom?" It had been said of Voltaire by Saint-Simon: "Arouet, the son of a notary who was employed by my father and me up to the time of his death, was exiled and sent to Tulle for verses that were satirical and extremely impudent. It would not amuse me to record such a trifle were it not that this same Arouet, today, under the name of Voltaire, a great poet and academician, has become, after many tragic misadventures, a kind of personage in the republic of letters, and has even acquired a certain importance among a certain set." The allusion was characteristic of Mirsky's systematic practice of depreciating the aristocracy of birth by playing off against them the aristocracy of talent. The young woman now put a problem. She had been trying to look up something in connection with the history of the Communist Party, but the books she had so far consulted had seemed to her strangely

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baffling. She asked Mirsky where she could find something more satisfactory. He replied, "*Vous êtes terrible, ma petite*," and diverted the conversation.

I began to be aware of the dislocation in Mirsky's whole intellectual life that had been caused by his conversion to Marxism. When he spoke of *The Waste Land* as a document on the decadence of capitalist society, I said that that did not prevent it from being also a very fine poem. He surprised me by answering with enthusiasm that Eliot was the greatest living poet. On another occasion, he was praising Belinsky, the early 19th century critic who had written of Pushkin and Gogol in terms of their social content in so relentlessly moralistic a way, and had thus become the patron saint of the dogmatic Soviet criticism which made of every work of literature a move in the game of propaganda and tried to rule on the attitude of the author as "correct" or "incorrect." I remembered having read in Mirsky's *Pushkin* a characterisation of Belinsky's Russian as "long-winded, vulgar, and untidy," and the assertion that "the man who could write such insipid and vulgar journalese about Pushkin cannot be believed to have had any real understanding of literary art." When I reminded him of this, he murmured, "Ah, that was *von einem anderen Standpunkt*." I admired his way of disposing of this by stepping over into another language. When he spoke to us that evening of Mayakovsky, I felt that he was very much pleased at believing himself to have found a thoroughly Soviet writer who satisfied his literary taste. "I've just been reading Mayakovsky," he said, "and you know he is a really great love poet—I mean, *really* great." It was as if he were dealing with our doubts as to whether Mayakovsky's poems of love might not be more declamation. I have been told that Mirsky himself was always in love in the most romantic fashion, and that an unwise affair in Moscow supplied one of the pretexts for banishing him.

These people I met at his house—all remnants, it was obvious, of the old intelligentsia—admired him and came to consult him; but his life must have been lonely. His relations with the rest of the Soviet world could not have been at all easy. On the part of the typical intellectual of Moscow, he inspired, I think, a mixture of jealousy, annoyance, and awe. His learning and his information were enormous, exact, and wide-ranging. He had nothing of the dilettante: his reading had been systematic; nor had he anything, on the other hand, of the academic scholar, who specialises minutely in a single field. He seemed to have read everything, and he always had dates at his fingertips. He wrote effectively in English and French; and his unusual historical range, when he had once got the hang of the Marxist method, enabled him to make novel interpretations. He was conspicuous, also, in public, not merely by his being so much taller than the dwarfish ex-serfs on the street that he towered above them like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, but also by reason of his British clothes: Oxonian grey flannel trousers, a jacket that did not match, and a flat English cap with a visor—all shabby to the point of trampishness.

One evening, when we were walking in the Tverskaya, a little stocky man who passed us contemptuously called Mirsky's name. Mirsky explained that the man was a poet, whose writings he had criticised adversely. When we went into a restaurant, the man followed us, and sat down at a table near us and uttered, Mirsky told me, horrible threats. He was an unreconstructed Cossack from the Urals, who had been singing the praises of the old Russia and making himself obnoxious in various other ways. One of the things he most admired in old Russia was its implacable anti-Semitism, and, having some grievance against a Jewish poet, he went and beat him up in his lodgings. The result of this was a petition signed by most of the principal poets in Moscow, recommending a jail sentence for the Cossack, and, as Mirsky told me later with a certain satisfaction, he was accordingly sent up for six months. On another occasion, a man that Mirsky said he had never seen came over and spoke to him in a restaurant. Dining out with him was

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always liable to queer or uncomfortable incidents.

One evening in the Sokolniki Gardens, while we were waiting for a table in the outdoor restaurant, a dark man who was eating alone invited us to sit down at his. We accepted, and Mirsky and I, disregarding him, went on in English with a literary conversation, which it seemed to us our companion was following, and I had the impression that Mirsky was laying down, in our discussion of Joyce, a somewhat narrower Marxist line than he might perhaps have done if the stranger had not been present. This person, as he got on with his wine, began smiling and chuckling to himself in such a disquieting manner that Mirsky addressed him in Russian. He explained that he was a Turkish business man, who had come to Moscow on business. "There was something rather eerie about his laugh," said Mirsky when we had left the restaurant.

Even people who had something in common with Mirsky could not afford to know him. I had even heard an intelligent Englishwoman married to a commissar make fun of him as "Comrade Prince." He had been famous for his arrogance and his irascibility among his own social world, and I used to shudder to think of the effort of self-restraint that his relations with his Soviet colleagues must cost him, and of the consequences when it inevitably broke down. My relations with him at first were a little uneven, because, not being involved as he was, in spite of my then Soviet sympathies, I would tend to base my conversation on our common interest in literature, and he would have to pull himself up by remembering his new orientation. He was not naturally a pedantic or fanatical man, and his wobblings and abrupt shifts of mood had sometimes their comic side. He usually started out by maintaining his Marxist attitude with a certain rigidity and tartness. He would austerely refuse cognac at dinner; then later, when we dropped in at a café, suggest a bottle of wine (hm?), but suddenly decide that, as for himself, he would rather order an ice. Would I have coffee? I said an ice—so he ordered an ice for me and coffee for himself. Then he lightly and brightly suggested cognacs. Under this influence, he would readily relax and begin quoting favourite poems—he seemed to know yards of poetry in half-a-dozen languages; and, on one occasion, for some reason I cannot remember, he sang the Greek national anthem. He would offset the bristling and slant-eyed mask appearance that recalled the Muscovite tsars by a giggle that suggested Edward Lear and was not always the proper accompaniment for the conventional Communist sneer. Or Kropotkin would come to the fore, and, warmed by the good cheer (of which he didn't get much: he was not, and made a point of not being, a member of the privileged groups), his dark eyes would melt and glow with an emotional sensibility and idealism that had something quite guileless and touching. It was another of his inconsistencies that he always gave money to beggars, which was not considered the thing, especially in the company of a visiting foreigner.

On the subject of the United States, at that time much admired in Russia, he combined the condescension of the official line towards a bankrupt capitalist society with an anti-Americanism which had evidently been stimulated by his residence in England. He had once made a lecture tour in Canada and the United States, and was equipped with the usual anecdotes about the impossible people one met there. Once I described to him my state of mind when I had made a prolonged sojourn in Italy: my surfeit with the furniture of the past, my restlessness at feeling that the big parade was going by in another street; and he told me that he had never felt like that in the least, that such a reaction was possible only for an American tourist—an incongruous attitude, I thought, for one who was under the impression that he had just proved the insufficiency of two or three centuries of Western art, and was ready to kick them downstairs. In the course of our evening at the Sokolniki Gardens, I became a little nettled by this attitude. I had asked him whether he would like me to send him any

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books when I was back in the United States, and he replied without enthusiasm that he would be glad to have the Beards' *The Rise of American Civilization* and Vachel Lindsay's collected poems, adding scrupulously, with an accent of Soviet disdain, "Those are the only American books that interest me." A little later, when we were sitting on a bench and well out of earshot of anyone, he asked me what the Ford plant in Dearborn was like. I replied that it was a whole domain in itself, completely walled off from the rest of Detroit; that one could only gain admittance with difficulty, and that, once one was inside, one became aware of being checked on at every point; that the workers could never escape from the demands of industrial discipline, and that they were spied upon every moment. "In fact," I concluded, "it's rather like here." He was silent for a little while, then got up from the bench and said, "Shall we be moving?" In spite of some provocation, I at once regretted this dig, for, though I was quite free to criticise my country, he was not so to criticise his.

One day I attended a meeting especially held for the enlightenment of a delegation of American schoolteachers. Mirsky, who was usually produced when fluent English was needed, was there on the platform to answer their questions. One woman wanted to know whether modern writers like Joyce didn't have a bad influence. "I'd say," he equivocated, "that a book like *Ulysses* could only have been produced by a perfectly putrid society."

He came over to me after the meeting and asked what I had thought of his answer. Feeling that he was rather ashamed of it, I told him, non-committally, that the question had been stupid. "But it had to be answered," he said. I did not know then that *Ulysses* was, for Mirsky, a delicate subject. There was actually a good deal of interest in Joyce —*Ulysses* was being translated (in a curiously literal word-by-word way), and coming out in one of the literary magazines, and there had just been a controversy about it. I learn from Mr. Gleb Struve's book, *Soviet Russian Literature*, that Mirsky had written, two years before, some articles condemning the influence of Joyce, and that one of the writers he had criticised, a playwright named Vsevolod Vishnevsky (later, in 1949, the winner of a Stalin prize for a drama that glorified Stalin as a hero of the Civil Wars), had vigorously defended himself on the ground that *Ulysses* constituted "a perfectly outspoken portrayal of men in the capitalistic era," and that Eisenstein had known Joyce in Paris and learned from him some of his methods. The discussion reached such a pitch that it had to be adjudicated by Karl Radek, at the Congress of Soviet Writers which took place the following year. He—so soon to be liquidated himself—declared on this occasion that "Joyce stands on the other side of the barricades. . . . Our road lies not through Joyce, but along the highway of Socialist realism." This justified Mirsky, no doubt, but at that moment he was taking a beating over his criticism of a novel by Alexander Fadeyev. Though Mirsky, Mr. Struve informs us, had written "from the ultra-left standpoint and shown himself *plus royaliste que le roi même*," he was given an indignant blast by the "proletarian" critics, who declared that an ex-White Guardist had no right to find fault with a Communist writer, and he was henceforth excluded from the *Literary Gazette* till Gorky came to his rescue in January 1935, declaring that "everybody knew" that Fadeyev's novel was bad, and that Mirsky should not be disqualified for having been, through no fault of his own, born a prince. The attack on him had been renewed with a certain official sanction, since an article denouncing him was published simultaneously in both *Izvestia* and *Pravda*. This had happened not long before I saw him, but Mirsky still had Gorky's backing.

I DID not find him at home one day when I called at his flat to return some books, and did not see him for weeks. At last, just before I left Moscow, he turned up at my own apartment, having walked the whole distance across the city. We went to dine at a good hotel, where he was quite frank in falling in with a proposal that, rather than

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sit down for a drink in the new bar which was advertising *Kokteyli*, where we should have had people close around us, we go to the outskirts of the dining-room—that this would "perhaps be more to the point" was Mirsky's way of putting it—where we could have our drinks in relative privacy. He explained that he had been out of Moscow: they had sent him out somewhere beyond Tashkent, a journey of many days, travelling "hard" all the time, so that he had had to sit up for nights. I had already had the impression that he was purposely given hackwork, and I suspected now that this mission had been meant to humiliate him. But, if so, it had affected him in the opposite way. I had never seen him so stimulated and cheerful. To get away from Moscow on his own must in itself have been a great relief. "You know, there are place-names out there," he told me, with the relish of the traveller discovering unexpected things, "that have no vowels at all—they consist of just three or four consonants!" He had been lecturing to the local officials about Russian literature—"rather elderly men, you know—very much interested, they're very keen to learn." Instead of proving a hardship and bore, the trip was the kind of thing he was ready and glad to do, for it gave him the satisfaction of feeling that he was performing, at the cost of inconvenience, a service to the national culture and a service to the new Russia. After dinner, when I suggested a second cognac, he answered, "*Je ne dis que non.*" When he left, I told him I was going away and thanked him for all his kindness. "No kindness on my part!" he answered, with a beaming benevolent glow.

That was the end of July. They arrested him some time in August, on charges that were never made public. Struve says that he was released a few months later, but forced to live outside Moscow. E. H. Carr, the historian and biographer, told me that he saw Mirsky once after this. Though they had formerly been on very good terms, he found Mirsky could no longer talk to him when there were other people present, and it had been only by visiting the men's room together that they had managed to exchange a few words. Later, at some point in the purges of 1936–7, Mirsky disappeared. Gorky, reputedly murdered, died in June 1936, and Mirsky was left at the mercy of the sycophants and jailors of Stalin. The pressure of mediocrity, of avid inferiority, cannot be overestimated in any field; but in the department of literature, it is likely to be particularly rampant. The arts of music and painting, the discipline of learned subjects, the technical domain of the sciences, require a minimum of training; but anyone who can read and write—and even the partly illiterate—are at liberty to occupy themselves with literature. In a dictatorship, this is fatal, for the hacks can then rule the roost. Maxim Gorky had been doing his best to prevent the ascendancy of the second-rate, but when he died, he left the literary world to the type of vindictive journalist who, elsewhere as well as in Russia, attached themselves to the Communist movement and beside whom the Salieri who murders Mozart in Pushkin's terrible little play is a man of respectable talent. The aristocracy of letters was going by the board as well as the old nobility. Not, of course, that one needed this animus to account for the suppression of Mirsky at the time of Stalin's gigantic purges. In any case, I do not like to think of Mirsky opening his door in his spectacles and dressing-gown, and being dragged from his pressed caviare and bad-smelling soap, from those almost Dostoevskian lodgings, in which he had had momentarily the illusion that he was serving Russia in lecturing to provincial officials and revising a translation of *Paradise Lost*.

THERE were at first various rumours as to what had become of him—that he was confined in a monastery and allowed to do nothing but translating, that he was editing a local paper in a remote Siberian town. Since nothing certain was heard, it was assumed, as time went on, that he was dead; and this supposition has been confirmed by a letter (dated May 1st, 1952) written to one of Mirsky's friends by a Russian D.P. in Europe. I here translate this document, which has never been published before. It is obviously

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not written by a person of very much education, and I have had to straighten out some bad grammar.

Gracious Lady,
Much-esteemed —— ——,

Most willingly and with sorrowful heartfelt pain, I am complying with your request. I had unfortunately few meetings with Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky—the dates are rather uncertain, since everything then was rather confused—we felt like flies in autumn.

Like many other political prisoners, I was sent, at the end of September, 1937, from the Ussuriskaya Taiga to a transit camp on our way to the city of Vladivostok. Two or three days after my arrival there—on October 3rd, 1937—there arrived in that transit camp a detachment of prisoners from Moscow, who had been condemned under the political statutes. In this transit camp were concentrated political prisoners to be sent to Kolyma. About a hundred and fifty had been assigned to our barracks, "brand-new" prisoners from the Moscow detachment. Finding myself in the same barracks with them, I made the acquaintance of Zhenya, the son of Professor Alexander Alexandrovich Florensky, who in time made me acquainted with the people in his section, among whom was D. Svyatopolk-Mirsky. They were interested, on our first meeting, when they learned that I had already done about a year in the camp, whereas they had only arrived from Gigorkhana. He questioned me about the conditions of life, the food, and the work in the concentration camps. Then Zhenya, the son of Professor Florensky, told me about each of the people in his section. And from him I learned that Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky had been in England and that he had been persuaded by Maxim Gorky to return to the U.S.S.R., that the Prince had worked at the Academy of Sciences in the Literary Division. He was arrested in 1937 in I do not remember what month and condemned without a hearing, not in court but at a special council of a special NKVD troika, *to ten years' imprisonment. We had arrived in Vladivostok by October 27th, 1937, and during those three weeks we were in the same barracks. At the time of our conversations, the Prince was not very communicative, but he did not refrain from expressing his opinion on the subject of Maxim Gorky. He said that Maxim Gorky ought to be removed if he had planned to spread this mass terror through the whole country, and that he could not be an indifferent observer of this bloody despotism.**

On October 27th, 1937, four hundred and fifty men, including four hundred women, were loaded on the steamer Kuku, *and on November 4th, 1937, we arrived at the town of Magadan, four kilometres from the Bay of Nagaev, in the* [name illegible] *Point No. 1. There I landed in another barracks; we met seldom, and I only rarely dropped in on their barracks. On November 16th or 17th, they were sent to the "Five Year Plan" goldfield, but I to the "Unexpected" goldfield. The winter of 1937–8 was terrible for the prisoners in Kolyma.† In some of the camps, up to 75 per cent perished.*

In 1938, in the month of December, after getting my feet frozen, I was sent as an invalid to the invalid camp, which was twenty-three kilometres from the town of Magadan, where I met some of the people from the Moscow group, and they told me that Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky was then in that camp in the hospital barracks. He was violently insane. I several times asked for permission to go to the hospital barracks, but this was always refused. At the end of several weeks, I was notified by the orderly that

*There is clearly something wrong here. The writer must have reported Mirsky incorrectly. The latter can hardly have imagined that Gorky was responsible for the purges.

†Kolyma, in north-east Siberia, is almost uninhabitable. The rivers are frozen up for eight or nine months of the year, and the polar night lasts from six to ten weeks. In a snowstorm the natives will not venture out without a rope tied to the izba, since it is possible to be buried in the snow and die a few yards from one's doorstep. It was the decision of Nicholas II that conditions in Kolyma were too severe for human beings to be made to live there. Stalin had no such scruples.

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Prince Svyatopolk-Mirsky was dead. I suppose that this was the end of January 1939 —the exact date I do not remember.

Out of this group of prisoners only Florensky's son Zhenya survived. A. A. Florensky himself had died a long time before D. Svyatopolk-Mirsky's death at the "Five Year Plan" goldfield at the beginning of 1938.

This is all, much-esteemed —— ——, that I know about the sad story of Prince Svyatapolk-Mirsky.

Accept the assurances of my perfect respect.

Richard Selig

Boyhood of Theseus

He came as if from tunnels. The green field
First stabbed, stunned, then calmed his sight:
He was home. The dark worm whose guts he filled
With longing, he left happily for light.

He did not then perceive that sky, too, was skin
He could not penetrate nor long abide;
That each emergence brought him deep within
Himself, himself more visibly inside.

Over the rippled road, past the green outhouse,
The stuttering windmill, the grey silo,
Where all alone the bull, tethered, bellows
Roaring the roofs of the grass down; where roots lie low

He stands at a distance to gaze, a small boy
Admiring the black flanks and rich unquietness
Of that voice full of seed and storm and joy.
Great in that city of muscle and bone, his smallness

Withered, sired by this beast, he suddenly grows
Strong in his tower of coming manhood, leaps the shore
Of short breath and little time to what he knows:
His spirit shall destroy the Minotaur.

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Robert Graves

The Whitaker Negroes

HAUNTINGS, whether in waking life or dream, are emotionally so powerful, yet can be so seldom ascribed to any exterior agency, that they are now by common consent allotted to the morbid pathologist for investigation—not, as once, to the priest or augur. A number of hauntings "yield to treatment," as the saying is. The great Dr. Henry Head told me once about a patient of his who was haunted by a tall dark man, always standing on the bedside mat. Head diagnosed a trauma in the patient's brain, of which the tall dark man was a projection, and proved his case by moving the bed slowly around; the tall dark man swung with it in a semicircle until he ended on a verandah just outside the french window. An operation removed him altogether. And I read in an American medical paper the other day of a man who, as a result of advanced syphilis, was haunted by thousands of women every night; after he had been given extract of snake-root they were reduced to the manageable number of one only.

There are also occasional hauntings which most psychologists would tend to dismiss as fantasies, or as symbols of some inner conflict; but which, however grotesque, deserve to be accepted at their face value and placed in the correct historical context. Let me describe a persistent haunting from my own case-history. I am glad to say that it did not originate in a ghost-ridden childhood and is therefore easier to assess, though I cannot claim to have been in good mental or physical health at the time; on the contrary, I was suffering from vivid nightmares and hallucinations of the First World War, in which I had just fought. Shells used to burst on my bed at night, by day I would throw myself flat on my face if a car backfired, and every rose garden smelt terrifyingly of phosgene gas. However, I felt a good deal better now that the War seemed to be over: an armistice had been signed, and the Germans were not expected to renew the struggle.

January 1919 found me back with the Royal Welch Fusilier reserve battalion at Limerick; where twenty years before my grandfather had been the last Bishop of the Established Protestant Church of Ireland. Limerick a firm stronghold of Sinn Fein, King George Street had become O'Connell Street, and when our soldiers took a stroll out of barracks they never went singly and were recommended to carry entrenching-tool handles in answer to the local shillelaghs. This return as a foreign enemy to the city with which my family had been connected for over two hundred years would have been far more painful but for old Reilly, an antique dealer, who lived near the newly-renamed Sarsfield Bridge. Reilly remembered my father and three of my uncles, and gave me fine oratorical accounts of my Aunt Augusta Caroline's prowess in the hunting field, and of the tremendous scenes at my grandfather's wake—at which his colleague, the Catholic Bishop, had made attendance

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compulsory in tribute to his eminence as a Gaelic scholar and archæologist. I bought several things from Reilly: Irish silver, prints, and a century-old pair of white, elbow-length Limerick gloves, left by the last of the Misses Rafferty and so finely made (from chicken-skin, he told me) that they folded into a brass-hinged walnut shell.

The shop smelt of dry rot and mice, but I would have gone there to chat more often, had it not been for a nightmarish picture hanging in the shop entrance: a male portrait brightly painted on glass. The sitter's age was indeterminate, his skin glossy-white, his eyes Mongolian, their look imbecile; he had two crooked dog-teeth, a narrow chin, and a billy-cock hat squashed low over his forehead. To add to the horror, some humorist had provided the creature with a duddeen pipe, painted on the front of the glass, from which a wisp of smoke was curling. Reilly said that the picture had come from the heirs of a potato-famine emigrant, returned at last with a bag of dollars to die comfortably of drink in his native city. Why this face haunted and frightened me so much I could not explain; but it used to recur in my imagination for years, especially when I had fever. I told myself that if I ever saw a midnight ghost—as opposed to midday ghosts, which had been common enough phenomena during the later, neurasthenic stages of the War, and less frightening than pathetic—it would look exactly like that.

IN THE spring of 1951, when Reilly had lain thirty years in his grave, Julia Fiennes visited me in Majorca. She was an American: Irish Italian on her father's side, New Orleans French on her mother's; a textile designer by profession; young, tall, good-looking, reckless and romantic. She had come "to take a look at Europe before it blows up." When we first met, a shock passed between her and me of the sort usually explained in pseudo-philosophic terms as "We must have met in a previous incarnation." Psychologists postulate "compatible emotion-groups." I am content to call it "Snap!" Indeed, as it proved, Julia and I could converse in a joking verbal shorthand, which meant little to anyone else, but for us expressed a range of experience so complex that we could never have translated it into everyday language. An embarrassing, if exhilarating discovery, because this rapport between us, strong as it was, proved inappropriate both to her course of life and mine. We wanted nothing from each other except a humorously affectionate acknowledgement of the strength of the link; thirty-three years separated us; we belonged to different civilisations; I was perfectly happy in my own life, and she was set on going on and on until she came to a comfortable stop in either contentment or exhaustion; which she has since done.

With Beryl, to whom I am married, I enjoy the less spectacular but more relevant rapport which comes from having all friends in common, four children, and no secrets from each other. The only eccentric form which our rapport takes is that sometimes, if I am working on some teasing historical problem and go to bed before I reach a solution, its elements may intrude not into my dream but into hers. The classic instance was when she woke up one morning, thoroughly annoyed by the absurdity of her nightmare: "A crowd of hags were swinging from the branches of a large tree in our olive grove and chopping off the ends with kitchen knives. And a horde of filthy gipsy children were waiting below to catch them. . . ." I apologised to Beryl. I had been working on textual problems in the New Testament, and establishing the relation between Matthew xviii. 20 and Isaiah xvii. 6 which ran: "As the gleaning of an olive-tree: two or three berries at the top of the topmost branch"; and of this with Deuteronomy xxiv. 20: "When thou beatest thine olive-trees thou shalt not go over the boughs again: the gleanings shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow." I went to bed wondering idly how the fatherless and the widow managed to glean those inaccessible olives, if no able-bodied stranger happened to be about.

"Well, now you know!" Beryl answered crossly.

Once when Julia and I were taking a walk

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down a dark road not far from the sea, and exchanging our usual nonsense, I suddenly asked her to tell me something really frightening. She checked her pace, clutched my arm and said: "I ought to have told you, Robert, days ago. It happened when I was staying with my grandmother in New Orleans, the one who had the topaz locket and eyes like yours. I guess I must have been twelve years old, and used to ride to school on my bicycle about half-a-mile away. One summer evening I thought I'd come home by a different route, through a complicated criss of cross-streets. I'd never tried it before. Soon I lost my way and found myself in a dead-end, with a square patio behind a rusty iron gate, belonging to an old French mansion overgrown with creepers. The shutters were green too. It was a beautifully cool, damp place in that heat. And as I stood with my hand on the latch, I looked up, and there at an attic window I saw a man's face. He grinned and rapped on the glass with leprous fingers and beckoned to me. . . ."

By Julia's description it was the identical face that had been painted on glass in Mr. Reilly's shop. When I told her about it, we broke into a run of perfect terror, hurrying towards the nearest bright light.

I THOUGHT it over afterwards. Perhaps Julia had become aware of my long-buried fear, which then became confused in her imagination with childhood memories of New Orleans; and it stood out so vividly that she really believed that she had seen the face grinning at her. She mentioned no pipe; but then the pipe could be discounted as extraneous.

After supper, an American called Hank, a New York banker's son, burst into the house, in a state of semi-collapse. Since he came of age, Hank had fallen down on every job found for him by his father, and now drifted about Europe as a remittance-man. He wanted to write, though without an inkling of how to begin, and was more than a bore about his problems. Hank told me once: "The night before I sailed, my father said a very cruel thing to me. He said: 'Hank, you're a good watch, but there's a part missing somewhere.'" As a regular time-piece Hank was certainly a dead loss; and the place of the missing part had been filled by an erratic ancillary movement which by-passed time altogether. For instance, a few days before this, Hank had begun to jabber hysterically about a terrifying earthquake, and wondered whether the world were coming to an end. Next morning the papers mentioned a very limited earthquake in Southern Spain, which had swung pictures on walls, dislodged cornices from half a dozen buildings in a small town, and made several telephone operators faint for terror. Now, Hank could hardly have felt the distant shock, although Majorca is said to form part of a range, mostly submerged, which continues south-westward to the mainland; but he had certainly caught the emotion of the frightened telephone girls.

"What's new, Hank?" I asked coldly.

"I've had a most horrible experience," he gasped. "Give me a drink, will you? I took a car to Soller this afternoon. The heel had come off my walking-shoe and I wanted to get it fixed. You know Bennasar the shoemaker, off the market square? I was just about to go in when I looked through the window. . . ."

Julie and I glanced at each other. We both knew what Hank was going to say. And he said it: "I saw a frightful face. . . ."

That made us feel more scared than ever.

SOON afterwards Julia went off on a rambling-tour through France, Austria, and Italy, and next year revisited Majorca with her mother. That was September 1952. She found me collaborating in a film-script with Will Price. Will comes from Mississippi; but New Orleans is one of his family's stamping grounds, so he and Mrs. Fiennes were soon discussing third and fourth cousins. One day as we all sat outside a café, Julia happened to mention Hank. "Who's Hank?" the others wanted to know. We explained, and Julia repeated the story of the New Orleans face. Her mother gasped and shook her roughly: "Darling, why in Heaven's

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name didn't you tell me about it at the time?"

"I was terrified."

"I believe you're making it up from something I told you, sweetie. I saw the same face myself before you were born—*and* the rusty iron gate—*and* the creepers and the shutters."

"You never told me anything of the sort. Besides, I saw it myself. I don't have other people's visions. You mustn't confuse me with Hank."

It occurred to me: "Probably her mother had the vision, or whatever it was, first. And then Julia as a child must have heard her telling the story to somebody, and incorporated it in her own private nightmare world."

But Will eased back in his chair and, turning to Mrs. Fiennes, asked in the playful Southern accent that they were using: "Honey, did you ever hear them up there in the old attic, sloshing water all over the place?"

None of us understood what he meant.

That night when we were sitting about, drinking coñac, Will raised his voice: "Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your permission to spin a yarn?"

"Why, of course."

Will started: "A good many years ago my father's law firm, Price and Price, acted for the mortgagees of a bankrupt property in Mississippi. Money was not forthcoming, so my father consented to take his fees in real estate—about eighty acres of almost worthless land at Pond near Fort Adams. Fort Adams was once a prosperous river port for the cotton country east of the River; the town itself was perched on the high bluffs which overhang the water hereabouts. But the River suddenly chose to change course five miles to the west and left Fort Adams with a wide frontage of swamp, so that all trade moved along to Natchez and Baton Rouge, which were still ports. These bluffs form the edge of a three-hundred-mile line of hills raised, they say, by prehistoric dust-storms blowing in from the Great Plains, and cut up by streams and swamps. There used to be dozens of rich plantations in the hills, but when the River deserted Fort Adams they were abandoned and allowed to revert to jungle.

"A victim of this catastrophe was Pond, a village that got its name from the cattle-pond which its leading citizen, old man Lemnowitz, dug and surrounded with two-storey framestores and warehouses. It used to be a tough job to fetch cotton over the hills from the plantations in the interior. The bales were loaded on enormous, sixteen-wheeled wagons drawn by from six to ten yoke of oxen. Teamsters and planters would camp at Pond before making the final drive uphill to Fort Adams. Old man Lemnowitz hired them extra oxen for the effort, and carried on a thriving trade in supplies of all sorts which he had hauled up from the River in the off-season.

"There were still traces of ancient wealth near Pond when I visited it—ruins of the antebellum mansions and slave-quarters, with huge, twisted vines writhing up through the floors—and at Pond itself Lemnowitz's warehouse, formerly a sort of Macy's, was still in business under the same name. But only one corner was now occupied: by a small, not very elegant, store that sold tobacco, notions, staples, and calico. It also called itself the Pond Post Office.

"The rest of Pond was jungle. My mother had come down there to see whether Price and Price owned any camellias; because sometimes these old planters collected rare flowers, and camellias could still be found growing wild in their deserted gardens. No! No orchids in that area, but camellias had been imported from all over the world, including even the Chinese mountains where they originally belonged. I was there to keep my mother company and check the land lines. Well, I went to buy a packet of cigarettes in the Lemnowitz store, and before I could get my change, a Thing walked in.

"It was undoubtedly human, in a weird way—walked upright and had the correct number of limbs. It even strode up to the counter and held out a dime for a can of snuff. But for the rest. . . . The face was a glazed greenish white, with four fangs that crossed over the lips, and a protruding under-

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lip. It had dark-brown hair, dripping with wet, under a black felt hat—the sort that gave the po' white trash from Georgia their nickname of 'wool-hats.' Long arms ending in gauntlets—the local work-gloves of canvas and leather with stiff cuffs—which hung below its knees as it walked. Muddy 'overhawls', leather brogans called 'clod-hoppers,' and a stink as if fifty cess-pools had been opened simultaneously. I said nothing, except perhaps 'Oh!' What would any of you have said in the circumstances? Imagine the dark cavern of a mouldering warehouse behind you, with acres of empty shelves lost in the gloom, and then in It comes through the door with the blazing sun behind It. When It vanished again, I ran to the window to make sure that my mother had not fainted, and then tip-toed back to the counter. *'What was that?'* 'Why, that was only a Whitaker Negro,' Mr. Lemnowitz said casually. 'Never seen one before?' He seemed to be enjoying the situation."

As Will told the story my old terrors came alive again. "Well, what was it really?" I croaked.

"I guess it was just a Whitaker negro," said Will. "Later, I decided to check up on my sanity. Mr. Lemnowitz told me that for a couple of nickels Boy Whitaker, who was only a half-Whitaker, would guide me to where his folk lived. And he did. There are, or were, several families of Whitaker negroes near Pond, tucked away in the jungle swamps where nobody ever ventured, not even the Sanitary Inspector. You have to understand the geography of these hills and reckon with their amazing verdancy and complete lack of vistas. One can march in a straight line up and down hills and over swamps for scores of miles without seeing a self-respecting horizon. The jungle is so thick in places that whole families have grown up and died within a mile of neighbours whose existence they didn't even suspect; and we Mississippians are noted for our gregariousness. I don't know how I ever reached the place myself, because I was working to windward and the stench spread for a half a mile around the place. I nearly threw up even before I arrived. They live tax-free and aren't mentioned in the census, and don't of course have to send their kids to school, still less get drafted for military service. The kids live in wallows under their huts, which are built on piles; apparently they don't come out much until they're fourteen years old or so—can't stand the sun. A good documentary sequence could be taken of a sow and her litter wallowing in the slime with a bunch of young Whitaker monsters: you could title it *Symbiosis*—which is what we call a 'fo'bit' word.

"The adults make a sort of living by raising hogs and chickens: enough to keep them in snuff and brogans and gauntlets and other necessities. The 'hair' proved to be mostly spanish-moss clapped wet on the head to keep it cool—it comes grey-green and goes dark when you soak it; but their real hair is also long, brown and wavy, not kinky in the usual negroid style. The brogans and gauntlets were filled with water. You see, they have no sweat-glands—that's their trouble. It's a hereditary condition and their skin needs to be kept wet all the while, or they die. They're Negroes; but said to be mixed with Choctaw Indian, also perhaps a strain of Chickasaw and Natchez."

Someone asked: "Didn't the snuff get a bit *damp*, Will?"

Will answered blandly: "No, sir, it did not! Snuff is 'dipped,' not snuffed, in those parts. It comes in cans about an inch and a half high. The lid of the can is used to dip a little snuff into the buccal pouch—which is another 'fo'bit' word meaning the hollow under your nether lip, excuse me for showing off."

Most of the coñac-drinkers grinned incredulously, but Will turned to me: "Did you ever hear of Turtle Folk? That's what they call whites afflicted by the same disease. There are quite a few cases up and down the Mississippi—Natchez, Vicksburg, Yazoo City, Baton Rouge—kept a close secret, though. Once I was in a house at Natchez where they kept a turtle-man in the attic, and I heard him sloshing water about overhead. That was what Julia must have seen in New

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Orleans, and Mrs. Fiennes before her. And I guess what you saw in Limerick was a portrait of a turtle-man brought back from the South as a curiosity."

We asked Will: "How did they get there? And why are they called 'Whitaker Negroes'?"

He answered: "I was coming to that. Around 1810, or so the story goes, a big planter named George Whitaker grew disgusted with his labour problems. He was an intelligent, wide-eyed, gullible New Englander, with Christian leanings, who wanted to reform the South and incidentally get even richer than he already was. He disliked the business of buying slaves and breeding them like cattle—with the result, he said, that they had no traditions, no morals, and no discipline but what could be instilled into them by fear. Ideally, he thought, a planter should be able to take a long vacation, like a European landlord, and come back to find work proceeding smoothly under Coloured overseers—only petty crimes to punish, and the crops properly harvested. He argued that if the early slave-traders had kept families and clans together under their African chiefs, the labour problem would not have existed. Then it occurred to him: Why not experiment? And he went down to New Orleans, where he interviewed the famous pirate Jean Lafitte. 'Sir,' he said, 'I wish you to visit Africa on my behalf and bring me back a whole tribe of negroes. Two hundred is the figure I aim at, but a hundred would do. I'll pay you two hundred dollars a head: men, women, and children. But mind, it must be a whole tribe, not samples from a score of them, or I don't buy.'

"George was a serious man, and Jean Lafitte decided to close with him. He sailed to the Gold Coast with his brother Pierre on the next tide and there, almost at once as luck would have it, surprised a whole tribe on the march. The Negroes had been expelled from somewhere in the interior and, being in a pretty poor way, offered no resistance. The Lafittes got two hundred of them aboard, made ingenious arrangements for their welfare on the voyage, and brought across alive one hundred and fifty—smuggled them through Fort Adam and the Bayou St. John until Pond came in sight. This constituted, you see, fraudulent evasion of the 1808 Federal embargo on the importation of slaves; so two hundred dollars a head was not an unreasonable price, considering the risk. But think of it in terms of money! Well, Mr. Lemnowitz told me, at Pond, that when George Whitaker saw the livestock that the Lafittes had brought back from Africa, and realised they were now his responsibility—though because of their constitution, of no more use as field workers than the bayou alligators—he turned deathly white. He paid Jean Lafitte without a word; then he went home, made out his will, bequeathing the bulk of his land to the then 'Territory of Mississippi'—after which he and his young wife jumped into the River, hand in hand, and were not seen again.

"Someone took over the plantation, but allowed the Whitakers to remain in a swamp and make out as best they could. And they hung on there long after the Whitaker mansion was swallowed up by the jungle. Their 'forty' is tax-free and inviolable because the original deed of gift represented taxes paid in perpetuity. About fifteen years ago a Whitaker went crazy—they are none of them very bright—and hit the trail for he didn't know where. He travelled from swamp to swamp, living off the land, and eventually reached the town of Woodville which is not very far away as the crow flies, but a thousand miles as the jungle grows. The good people of Woodville, who normally publish an extra of their local paper only when a war is declared or a President assassinated, hurried one through the press with the banner headline: *'MAN FROM MARS!'*, because the poor wretch was half-dead and couldn't explain himself, and all the horses in the town were bolting, and the women screaming their heads off."

"And the Choctaw blood?"

"The Choctaws and Chickasaws were the local Indians, who obligingly moved away from the neighbourhood to make room for

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cotton. I was told that a few rogue males stayed behind in the swamps, mostly pox-cases, and intermarried with the Whitaker Negroes for want of other women."

"Did your mother find any camellias?"

Will, detecting a hint of irony in the innocent question, answered: "Thank you, ma'am. She got a lapful."

LATER, my friend Tom Matthews, then managing editor of *Time*, sent me the medical column of December 14th, 1931:

TURTLE FOLK

At Houston, Miss., a Mrs. C. keeps a tub of water in her back yard for an extraordinary purpose. It is a ducking tub for her five-year-old son. Every time he feels uncomfortable he jumps in, clothes and all. Mrs. C. does not scold. For that is the only way the boy can keep comfortable. He lacks sweat glands, which in normal people dissipate two to three quarts of cooling perspiration every day.

Mrs. C. has another son, an infant, who likewise lacks sweat glands. He is too young to go ducking himself. So she dowses him from time to time with scuppers of water. Neither child can sleep unless his night clothes and mattress are wet. They take daytime naps in their damp cellar, with moist sacks for pillows.

Nearby at Vardaman, Miss., are two farmer brothers similarly afflicted. They have a sweatless neighbour woman who must also wet herself for comfort. At Vicksburg, Miss., there is a seventh of these folk who, like turtles, must periodically submerge themselves. He is a 12-year-old boy.

Dr. Ralph Bowen of Memphis has made a medical report on the phenomenon. The seven suffer from "hereditary ectodermal dysplasia of the anhydrotic type." That is, they lack sweat glands, and the lack is hereditary. However, the seven Mississippi cases are related only as indicated above. This suggests that the failing is not so uncommon as heretofore believed. Along with the lack of sweat glands goes a lack of teeth. None of the seven Mississippi cases has more than two teeth.

Tom also sent me a typescript from *Time's* research files:

From ANDREWS' DISEASES OF THE SKIN
Hereditary ectodermal dysplasia

There are numerous anomalies of the epidermis and appendages due to faulty evolution of the epiblastic layer of the blastoderm. Atrichosis congenitalis with or without deformities of the nails and teeth is common, and is accompanied at times by nevi and other congenital anomalies. Congenital absence or malformation of the nails and teeth is also of frequent occurrence, and in circumscribed areas it is not out of the ordinary to find that the sebaceous and sweat glands are absent or impaired. In restricted areas there may be a complete absence of the epidermis and appendages at birth. . . . The appearance of these patients is typical and conspicuous, as they have a facies that is suggestive of congenital syphilis. The skin is hairless, dry, white, smooth, and glossy. The teeth are entirely absent or there may be a few present, but the development is always defective.

There are dystrophic disturbances in the nails. The scalp hair is sparse and of a fine soft texture. The cheek bones are high and wide, whereas the lower half of the face is narrow. The supra-orbital ridges are prominent; the nasal bridge is depressed, forming a "saddle-back nose," The tip of the nose is small and upturned, while the nostrils are large and conspicuous. The eyebrows are scanty, none being present on the outer two thirds. The eyes slant upwards, producing a Mongolian facies. At the buccal commissures radiating furrows, "pseudo-rhagades," are present. . . . The lips are thickened, the upper one being particularly protrusive. The patient studied by Dr. Mackee and myself never sweated.

The affection is familial, generally affecting males, and seems to be due to an injury during the third month of uterine life. Some of these patients are mentally deficient, but the majority of them have normal mentality because the anlage of the nervous system is distinct from the cutaneous ectoderm long before the injury occurs. . . .

I WAS now in a position to review the story from the beginning. In 1919, I had been neurotic, as a result of having spent thirteen months in the trenches under continuous bombardment, and had begun to "see things" in France even before a fragment of eight-inch shell went clean through my right lung and knocked me out. Limerick was a dead-alive city haunted by family ghosts, and the glass picture focussed my morbid fears of the

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past and future—yes, it must have been the portrait of a turtle-man brought back to Ireland from the Southern States.

Julia and I: because of the unusually close rapport between us, partly explained by her Irish blood, it was not surprising that we should be scared by the same sort of face. Will had testified that the original was highly terrifying to any but a physician who could look coldly at it and characterise it as a *facies*. And why should Julia's mother not have stumbled across the same old house in New Orleans, and seen the same turtle-man peering through the attic window twelve years previously?

Hank: no natural sympathy existed between him and me, or between him and Julia. But he did have a remarkable receptivity for the emotions of people at a distance, and the trick of converting them into waking visions of his own. Clearly, he had subjectivised the fright which Julia and I conveyed to each other into something horrible that he had himself seen.

Will Price: he had a keen dramatic sense, but I found him far more accurate than most of my friends about names, dates, and facts, and could not disbelieve his story. That is to say, I could accept what he saw with his own eyes. And what Mr. Lemnowitz told him about George Whitaker and the Lafitte brothers was, Will himself confessed, "shrouded in local myth." On principle I suspect any legend about the Lafittes, as I do any legend about Paul Revere, Paul Jones, or Paul Bunyan. Besides, what connection could there be between the Whitaker Negroes and the White Turtle Folk who occur spasmodically on the Lower Mississippi? Nobody has suggested that sophisticated white women of Natchez, Vicksburg, Vardaman, Baton Rouge, Yazoo City, and New Orleans ever paid clandestine visits to Pond in search of a new sexual *frisson*. It therefore seems probable that if the Lafittes did indeed smuggle a shipload of Negroes to Pond, these were healthy enough when they arrived, but proved susceptible to the turtle-disease, which is endemic to the Mississippi; and because of inbreeding it became hereditary among them. The families affected were disowned by their masters but permitted to camp on the swampy fringes of the Whitaker estate, after George dragged his wife with him into the River—which he probably did, if at all, for some simple domestic reason. And because high cheek-bones and a weak growth of hair are characteristics of the turtle-folk *facies*—which resembles that of the congential syphilitic—there seems to be no reason for bringing the pox-ridden Choctaws and Chickasaws into the story either.

THIS is not yet all. In 1954, I broadcast a short summary of the foregoing story for the BBC. As a result, a letter came to me from Mrs. Otto Lobstein, an Englishwoman who was going off some months later with her husband for a tour of the Southern States, and proposed to check up on the Whitaker Negroes. I provided the necessary map-references, and in due process of time she sent me a letter and a photograph. The photograph showed a Mississippi finger-post pointing south to Woodville, north to Pickneyville, east to Pond and Fort Adams; and the fine condition of the three roads suggested that prosperity had returned to the neighbourhood since Will Price's visit there more than twenty years previously. This was the letter.

New Orleans,
Feb. 1st, 1955

Dear Robert Graves,

We spent an interesting day tracking down the Whitaker Negroes, after camping for a night in the Mississippi woods—a wretched night because this was the hardest frost of the winter. But the early morning sun was startlingly warm and the fields beautiful; no wind blew and thin, erect strings of smoke came from the small shacks along the road.

Pond is not on the map, so we took the road to Fort Adams until we came to a very lovely old plantation home, where one Rip White directed us to the Whitaker plantation. . . . When we reached the plantation, we met Mr. Whitaker, the owner, who was going somewhere in a hurry, but told us that the old mansion some way back in the fields had been demolished a few years before. (Its place was now taken by a large, hard-looking, unromantic

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modern bungalow.) He also told us that the land had been split up at the same time between the various Whitaker sons—which didn't seem to coincide with Will Price's story that the land had been deeded to the State, unless perhaps a brother of the man who committed suicide had contested the deed of gift and won it back. Anyhow, Mr. Whitaker advised us to ask Mrs. Ray about the story; she had raised all the Whitaker whites for two or three generations.

Dear old Mrs. Ray gave us interesting recollections of what her mother and father had told her as a child: how, when the overseer had whipped a slave over a log for not picking enough cotton, the rest would creep out of the plantation after dark and go into a "holler"—bending their heads low down so as not to be heard, they would sing and pray for freedom. But she had no stories about Whitaker Negroes.

At Woodville, a small town on the way to Pond, we visited the Court House to look for records of the original George Whitaker. There we found an intelligent official, Mr. Leek, who had actually met some of the Whitaker Negroes, when he helped them to fill up questionnaires during the Second World War. He told us that they were dying out fast. In winter, he said, they wore ordinary clothes; in summer, heavy underclothes soaked in water. The Court House records, however, did not show that any Whitaker land had been deeded to the State since 1804, when they began. Mr. Leek's explanation of why the Whitaker Negroes were so called was that the first sufferer had "Whitaker" as his Christian name.

At last we reached Pond. Pond Post Office is a big, barn-like structure which, as in the days of trading-posts, carries everything and deals in sacks of flour and rolls of cotton; the large, serene pond mentioned by Will Price lay at the foot of the hill. Mr. Carroll Smith, the postmaster in succession to Mr. Lemnowitz, sold us some safety-pins. He was small and silver-haired, with sensitive brown eyes. At first he showed a certain reticence when we questioned him, but gradually shed it. He confirmed that very few Whitaker Negroes are left, and said that they lived on the plantations, not in the swamps. Nowadays, only one member of a family of five or six children would inherit the disease. Occasionally a Whitaker Negro visited the store, which was always an unpleasant experience, because the glandular excretions emitted through his mouth conveyed an appalling odour of decay. Mr. Smith had never heard the story of George Whitaker's suicide and believed, with Mr. Leek, that the original sufferer was an immigrant Negro from Virginia. He suggested that we should visit a Mr. McGeehee in Pinckneyville, the nearest village, who had a couple of Whitaker Negroes working for him. He would say no more on the subject, though we talked for some time about share-cropping. So we drove on.

Mr. McGeehee's plantation was very English, with a tree-lined driveway running through park-like meadows (where Herefords and Red Devons grazed) to a big, unpretentious house. Mr. McGeehee himself was most hospitable; so was his mother, a gentle little old lady, looking like a pressed flower. We chatted politely in the spacious drawing-room about farming and children and plantation houses; but both the McGeehees remained emphatic that we must not meet the two Whitaker Negroes working for them. Mr. McGeehee, very rightly, felt responsible for his employees, and said that too many sightseers had come to stare at the pair recently, which made them sensitive. So my husband and I did not press the point; and in any case, we felt the point slipping away from us. A group of people with a strange history, living in odd conditions and with a bizarre inherited disease, are one thing, and a few sick individuals who happen to have been born into normal families are quite another. . . .

Yours sincerely,
ANNA LOBSTEIN

This calm and practical travelogue has dispelled my haunting nightmare for ever. Terror gives way to pity; the pirates Jean and Pierre Lafitte, together with the rogue Choctaws and Chickasaws, are banished to the realms of macabre legend. Only the hospitable Mr. McGeehee and his gentle old mother, who resembles a pressed flower, are left on the stage, in charge of two sensitive sufferers from hereditary ectodermal dysplasia of the anhydrotic type, whose principal purpose in life is to herd silky-grey Brahmini cattle in lush parkland—a far more agreeable example of *symbiosis* than the one reported by Will Price.

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F. R. Allemann

Glimpses through a Curtain

Some Observations on the Soviet Zone of Germany

TWICE a year, the Leipzig Fair gives Western journalists the opportunity of comparing conditions in East and West Germany. For ten days the suspect foreigner becomes a courted and popular guest: the ambition of the powers-that-be in the Eastern zone is to regain for this great industrial fair its former status in the world, and there is also the chance that the more naïve among the visitors may involuntarily think of Leipzig *en fête* as typical of the country in its everyday working clothes.

The visa for the Fair, granted without any formality at the zonal frontier, entitles the visitor to stay only in Leipzig. If you want to go to Dresden or Halle, Magdeburg or Weimar, you need a special permit, and that is far from easy to come by. Last year an Australian of German origin who had flown half round the world, hoping to take advantage of the Fair to visit his elderly parents in Saxony, found it impossible to get permission, and the old people had to squeeze into an overcrowded train and meet their son in the comfortless indifference of a second-rate Leipzig hotel. The security measures this year were not so grotesque, but they are equally nonsensical, for what cannot be seen can be learnt without any trouble from conversations at the stands in the Fair and at café tables. And it is astonishingly easy to get the East Germans to talk. As soon as they knew I came from Switzerland they began to tell me, without any prompting, of their troubles and needs. For them the Fair is an opportunity to meet the outside world. "Do you think I come here to earn money?" an artisan asked me. He was running his car—a shaky pre-war model—as a taxi during the Fair. "I bring my car every time, not because I'm asked to, and not because a refusal might have disagreeable consequences—although that's a point too—but simply because it gives me a chance to speak to people I'd never otherwise meet."

This need for contact, this quite elemental need, is perhaps the strongest impression brought back from a visit to Soviet Germany. "If you knew how isolated we are here." How often one hears it!—and from men who can obviously stand on their own feet, even men who belong to the upper ranks of the new *régime* and have made comfortable positions for themselves.

ON OUR way to Leipzig, the passport and customs examination at Marienborn was rapid and courteous; only the West German newspapers lying about in the carriages were confiscated, but, as far as I could see, there was no search for "contraband literature" in the passengers' luggage. It was the same on our return journey, but this time the officials of the Federal Republic removed Communist literature from the seats and tables. When I asked if I might keep some, permission was granted readily and politely. "Sometimes we get hundredweights of propaganda in just

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one train," the customs official said. "One thing they don't seem to be short of over there is paper." He was right. Anyone who wanted to could have collected in one day a trunk full of leaflets, pamphlets, booklets, and albums, displaying beaming activists and smiling tractor drivers in the German Democratic Republic, and illustrating in grim blacks and greys the "plans of the Western warmongers." "But when I wanted a few hundred leaflets about some church gathering printed," a priest in Leipzig told me, "they said there were no available supplies of paper."

It is not only the foreign visitor who is exposed to this flood of propaganda. The inhabitant of the Soviet zone is subjected to an unceasing drumfire of slogans that blaze at him from the wall of every house and the window of every streetcar, from station platforms and factory chimneys. Even the envelope in which a telegram is delivered carries its slogan. The slogans are drawn from the classics of German literature as well as Marxism. Schiller, in particular, makes his appearance as a political activist: *Wir wollen sein ein einig Volk von Brüdern* is inscribed with chapter and verse on the tall boards which adorn all the zonal check-points.

LEAFLETS and street signs do not by any means exhaust the propaganda arsenal. For he who will not read must listen. In the centre of Leipzig the loudspeakers blare unceasingly. Even many railway carriages (not, it is true, the inter-zonal ones) are equipped with loudspeakers which, between slow waltzes and songs by a Russian tractor drivers' choir, may inflict on the defenceless passengers reports on atomic warfare, with an anti-American twist. In every carriage, admittedly, there is a switch for turning off the loudspeaker, but to use it would be a hostile demonstration against the régime, and nobody does this lightly. The disembodied voice is allowed to go on talking, talking, talking, to rise in indignation and to tremble with emotion, to utter peace slogans in the accents of hate, and to sing battle songs in tones of loving warmth, while the passengers too go on talking, about the butter shortage or the latest sports results. Once, when I was alone in a carriage with a factory foreman (he wore a "Friends of the Soviet Union" badge), I made a cautious remark about the radio. "You know," he said equably, "we've got used to it. We simply don't hear it. You learn to stop your ears without cottonwool." And when, in a Leipzig restaurant, I dropped a word about the omnipresent slogans, my companion looked at me in astonishment. "But we don't even *see* them any more." The massive propaganda machine has run itself to a standstill; instead of rousing, it deadens. It has become a boring routine, like the ever-recurrent inspection in railway trains. That's the way they do things and there's no need to get excited about it. You make yourself look inconspicuous, look intelligently attentive when necessary, and let your thoughts roam elsewhere. Of course, you have to master the current formulas, and if necessary use them; it's easy and it means nothing.

A small-town doctor told me about an essay written by a twelve-year-old boy on the theme of the Christmas fair. It had everything in it, from the Festival of Peace to the Fight against the Warmongers, and led from a colourful description of the stalls and booths at the fair to the government's price reduction policy. His father thought the varnish had been laid on too thick. Was it necessary? Oh yes, said the boy, he did it for the teacher's sake. But was his teacher in the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) then? "No, but that's why. My essay will be the best in the class, and it will be sent up to the headmaster. He's a dreary party bigwig, and if I'd just written about the swings and roundabouts he'd go for the teacher. I had to help him, he's an awfully decent chap, so I wrote all that twaddle."

It is not perhaps a typical story. But I heard enough to convince me that even the youngsters are learning at an early age to distinguish between words and thoughts, to pay lip service to the official ideology, and to deride the "*Schwindel*." "A system that is built on falsehood can be met only by lies," an SED official said to me. There is no doubt that opposition, or rather discontent and half-

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heartedness, goes deep. When I asked how many would vote for the SED in a free election, the answers varied from one to ten per cent.

ALMOST every conversation I had in Leipzig confirmed this impression of the East German's dislike of SED propaganda. A number avoided political themes, but most of them, when they were sure they were talking to a foreigner and not an informer, grumbled freely. Of course, they grumble about other things too—housing and food shortages, difficulties at work, faulty planning. It is by no means true that they all glance fearfully over their shoulder before uttering a critical word. To present the East Germans as a mass of terrified creatures who do not dare to open their mouths and who shake at the knees when confronted by representatives of the government or Party would be a distortion. Members of the former bourgeoisie who still remain in East Germany do live in a state of constant anxiety, and do their best to make themselves inconspicuous. But the workers and the "technical intelligentsia" are quite free of such inhibitions. They have to avoid giving their criticism an explicitly political edge, but apart from that they can and do complain freely. "What can happen to me after all?" asked a toolmaker, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't have to worry about my job—skilled men are not that plentiful. And I know enough not to shout what I think about Ulbricht and the whole gang from the housetops."

The feeling that one can take a good many liberties is particularly highly developed among the "activists," the real labour aristocracy of the East German Republic. They are aware that their position gives them more than material privileges, and they exploit that knowledge. Of course, they are afraid of informers, but so long as they frame their remarks cleverly enough to be fitted into the category of "bolshevik self-criticism" they need not keep silent. To describe the East German Republic as a police state, which visitors from the West so easily do, does not perhaps quite do justice to the conditions there. In a railway train bound from Leipzig to Berlin (as in most such trains) part of a railway carriage was reserved for "Soviet citizens": democratic fraternity and East German sovereignty have not quite reached the stage at which the occupying power has given up privileges renounced long ago in the Federal Republic. But there were no Soviet citizens, and so "ordinary" passengers took the seats. The guard tried to turn them out, but he was sent packing. His superior came along and asked the German passengers to leave the seats free at least as far as Dessau. He was unsuccessful too. If Soviet citizens came along, the passengers said, they would of course give up their seats. "That's the way to do it," said a young worker. "If we had more guts, we'd be much better off."

"If we had more pluck. . . ." The words are characteristically vague, ambiguous, carrying several undertones. "We'd be much better off. . . ." It *might* mean that they would have shaken off the whole nightmare, and if that is how you interpret it, it carries an echo of the 17th of June, two years ago. Or it might mean that they would have eliminated the obstacles to "socialist construction" and therewith the reasons for discontent and bitterness. These ambiguous phrases, heard everywhere, are undoubtedly one way of expressing disagreeable truths. But are they only that? Do they not also reveal a certain ambivalence of moral and intellectual attitudes, in which opposition to the rulers is strangely mixed with a certain (frequently unconscious) identification with the régime? Propaganda, education, and the incessant hammering in of the same words and ideas are not without effect. The people shut themselves off from this brain-washing, but, heard a thousand times, some of it does stick and imperceptibly colours their mental habits. The régime has not succeeded in winning over its citizens, but it has confused them and has affected the thinking of even its most convinced opponents.

IT IS not at all true that the East Germans think of the Federal Republic as a model, the goal of their desires, the promised land of

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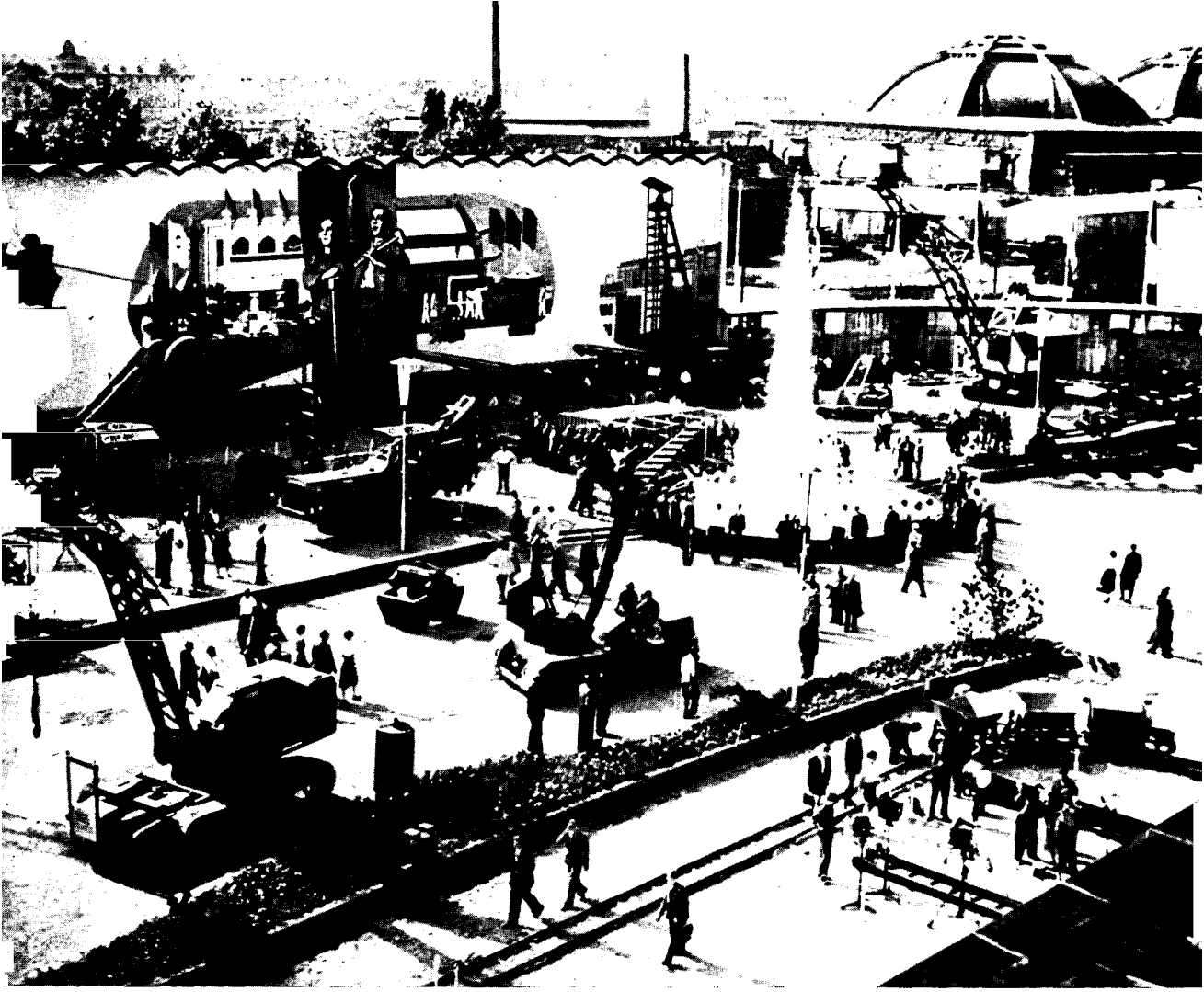

The Leipzig Fair

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East German Youth on Parade

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freedom. Of course, they envy the West German standard of living, and dream how fine it would be to be spared the burden of Party propaganda and the secret police. But their envy and admiration is almost always tempered by an element of rejection —the pride of the poor relation as he observes the wealthy and arrogant upstart. "It's easier for them over there—but they are self-seeking, callous, and free of all misgivings." The reaction to the Bundestag debates on the Paris treaties was typical; an astonishing number of people in the Soviet zone listened to the wireless reports and discussed them passionately. Their acrimony aroused even more disapproval among them than among the people of the Federal Republic. "They're free over there, and instead of standing together they insult each other." I heard such remarks from the most resolute opponents of Communism, followed as often as not by "At least we work together here."

The feeling that in East Germany there is a much greater sense of community, more solidarity, more willingness to understand and to help one's fellow men than there is in the West is very widespread, not least among those who have had the opportunity in the last few years to get to know the Federal Republic or West Berlin at first hand. Not infrequently a man who seems not to have a good word to say for the East German system will make an astonishing *volte face* and suddenly begin defending the "social" achievements of the same system which he has just condemned as "sheer exploitation" or a "prison régime." And although, in his earlier talk, he had put a distance between himself and the rulers by referring to them as "they" or, contemptuously, "those people," he now uses "we," and "among us here." He will tell you how important it is that class barriers have been eliminated or at least lowered, that the talented child of a worker or farmer can get a good education, that moneybags no longer determine opportunity, and what wonderfully cheap holidays the worker gets through his union. The idea of the Communist state as "social" and "progressive" has taken root even among those who think themselves completely immune to the régime's propaganda and who complain incessantly of the tyranny of "norms." This, too, reflects that ambivalence which makes many East Germans—and not, in my opinion, the worst —paint conditions in the Soviet zone in the darkest colours and at the same time defend it against West German "arrogance" and "superciliousness."

The same is true of many members of the SED, and of "non-party progressives." They dream of a kind of Socialism without the SED (not necessarily identifying themselves with the old Social-Democratic Party); they even have a good word for Communism and blame "the Russians" or their "hirelings" for the unsatisfactory state of affairs. The most peculiar example I met of these "ideological vacillations," to use Party jargon, was the manager of a nationalised factory who, after a good many glasses of Hungarian Riesling, admitted that he was "for" Marx and Lenin —"but" private economy and free competition had to be re-established. The grotesque incompatibility is characteristic of the way many East Germans are torn and twisted between a half-compulsory, half-voluntary recognition of social progress, Soviet-zone-style, and a rejection constantly nourished by experience of the practical forms in which that "progress" is manifested.

THE word "youth" is written in large capitals in East Germany. For the Communists, no effort is too great to win over the young generation. They are concerned not merely with training them in the "Free German Youth" (FDJ) so that they will be less inclined to resist the pressures of the régime; it is equally important that from their ranks will come the future élites of the Soviet zone, and to their formation the SED devotes the more attention since it has no illusions about the reliability of the experts they now pamper.

The political and economic machinery of the zone is run by officials who are, or appear to be, faithful to the Party line, but the great majority of them lack the qualifications required for the job, while the administrators and managers in the immensely swollen

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bureaucracy and in industry have for the most part been made, by their experiences, profoundly critical if not actually hostile to the régime. This means that the small core of genuine adherents are overloaded with work (the typical diseases of the managerial profession, ranging from stomach ulcers to heart failure, flourish as widely in the industrial centres of the East Zone as they do in the Ruhr) and not all of them are up to their complicated jobs. Those that are, fall under constant suspicion of not having completely sloughed off their capitalist swaddling clothes.

Rapid advance is therefore open to young people. Representatives of West German and foreign firms at Leipzig who negotiated with the State foreign trade organisation were astounded to find themselves dealing with young men of 24 or 25 just out of the technical colleges, universities, and Party high-schools. Anyone with the right political slant who knows something of his job has no need to worry about his place in the sun. Of course, the higher he rises, the greater his responsibility, and the greater the risks he runs. If he pulls through, there need be no limits to his ambitions. But if he fails, or if he is made the scapegoat for the failure of his superiors, he may fall more rapidly than he rose.

It is not surprising that the Communist régime does not lack attractions for the young generation. They need only pay the price of conformism. And if the ambitious youngster comes of a working-class family, all doors are open. The child of bourgeois parents has to do much better than average to make his way to the university. A "young proletarian" with only moderate talents is pushed forward in every way, while even the highly gifted "offspring of the former ruling classes" is held back. There is a class mystique which blossoms as strangely as the race mystique of Nazism, for experience has shown that resistance to Communism is no less strong in the working class than it is in the bourgeoisie, which has disintegrated and lost its economic basis; and that the typical intellectual, whatever his social background, seems by and large more accessible to the charms of dialectical materialism than does the man at the bench. Theory has it otherwise; and in this curiously perverted materialist system, theory counts for more than experience.

It is one of the significant anomalies of the East German system that these young people, who are so urgently courted by its representatives (and who are in truth among its most privileged beneficiaries), constantly display an inclination towards "creeping revolt." Despite the careful selection of students, the higher educational institutions have often been centres of uncompromising resistance. The "strike" in the East Berlin high-school against the teaching of Russian is as typical as the students' response to the *Junge Gemeinde*, the youth organisation of the Evangelical Church, at one time hard pressed by the régime but now tolerated. Notwithstanding the disadvantages it may entail, profession of religious belief seems to be almost the only form that "legal" opposition can take, and though it is spiritually founded, it often has a political intent.

SINCE June 1953, life in the Soviet zone of Germany has proceeded under the sign of the "new course." It has had roughly the same significance as Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) in the Soviet Union of the twenties—a retreat all along the line from positions hastily seized and later found untenable, a respite on the road from revolution to socialism.

At the time of Stalin's death the Eastern zone—and the entire Eastern bloc—had reached a point at which the "construction of socialism," relentlessly pursued, threatened complete catastrophe. The danger was clearest in agriculture. Farmers with medium and large holdings—that is, the most productive and capable group on the land—had been abused and insulted as kulaks, tormented and cheated and swindled; they had been pushed to the wall by excessive demands for deliveries of produce, squeezed by extra taxes, discriminated against in favour of the collectives; thousands had at last left their farms and escaped to West Berlin. Their

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land was mismanaged or left wholly untilled. Industry suffered no less, as a result of the attempt to replace economic incentives by terror.

The new line, announced on June 9th, 1953, in a series of Politburo decisions, seemed at first merely the German reflection of Malenkov's policy, but it met the internal requirements of the East German Republic by relaxing pressures that were fast becoming intolerable. Politically, relaxation was quickly brought to an end by the rising of June 17th: in place of the promised amnesty came a new wave of persecutions; a new and more severe terror reigned instead of the rule of law which had seemed for a moment to be about to return. But in the economic and social fields the concessions of June 9th remained in being and were extended. The attempt to raise norms (i.e. reduce wages) was abandoned. Earnings were maintained, while the prices of a wide variety of goods in the state shops were reduced. The peasants, for whom tax exemptions and reduced deliveries meant that they could sell their surpluses on the free market at favourable prices; the small business man, who could now get materials and short-term credits; the promise of more plentiful supplies and improved service for the consumer (the customer up till then having been regarded as an inanimate object in the economic process)—all these sections benefited. Of course, not all the promises were kept, but the improvement which set in in 1953 is indisputable. The peasants still found themselves arguing with hectoring officials and suspicious tax collectors, and after a while the effort to force them into the collective farm was resumed. But the force was applied more gently than before; a farmer who managed his land well could once again hope to earn his living, and the small businessman had a better chance of making out and showing real economic initiative.

The SED itself has had to admit that over the past year private economy showed the biggest advance—18 per cent compared with a production increase of 8 per cent for State industry and 15 per cent for local (municipalised) industry. Even within the narrow limits set for it by the Communist state, capitalist enterprise made better use of the new line than socialist industry.

The policy introduced in 1953 was clearly a realistic one; its very successes have startled the régime, for since the Communists aim at the complete annihilation of the private economy, the vitality shown by what remains of capitalism in Eastern Germany is bound to appear alarming. It strengthens those social forces which the régime is out to crush. That is the paradox of a NEP, with which the Soviet Union had to come to grips in the twenties—it yields results, but it does so in the "wrong" way. The direct economic gain is bought with the temporary abandonment of "social progress" in the Communist sense of the word. The régime is therefore confronted with the question: How long can it allow this to continue? And sooner or later the moment comes when it must reimpose its major objectives and call a halt to undesirable tendencies, that is, launch a new Socialist offensive. In Russia, NEP was followed by the five-year plan and the pitiless "liquidation of the kulaks."

ALL the indications suggest that this point, at which the new line becomes the old, when liberal policies are replaced by compulsion and the period of concessions gives way to a new assault, has now been reached in the German Democratic Republic. This means that private economy will be further restricted, the drive towards collectivisation resumed, and the small man eliminated. It means, moreover, that emphasis will shift from consumer goods to heavy industry, and that the requirements of capital accumulation will be met by heavier taxes and lower wages. These trends are already in evidence.

Two years ago, it was promised that the distribution of consumer goods would be increased by one third. That programme has now been dropped. The plan for 1955, that originally provided for a rise in the value of consumer goods production of two milliard marks, has been radically reshaped, and the resources it would have required diverted to blast furnaces and similar installations. The

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deficit on the operation of nationalised industry, met by the budget, is to be eliminated by higher norms, reduced earnings, stricter control of materials, and rationalisation through the dismissal of "redundant labour," particularly among administrative personnel. The goods available for mass distribution, never adequate at the best of times, have to be cut down if inflation is to be avoided. At Leipzig the shop windows were full and the hotels well supplied, but it was not difficult to learn that the sugar and butter and coffee which we visitors received liberally had practically disappeared from the State shops, even in Leipzig itself, and that had not happened at Fair-time before. The East German Republic is a beet-sugar area, and until now the sugar ration has been met, but it seems doubtful whether this can be maintained, since the state has contracted to sell so much abroad.

Hoarding is being blamed, and the press and radio issue warnings against panic buying, but the authorities know quite well that hoarding, even if it is really taking place here and there, is only a symptom and not a cause of the present difficulties. At the same time the crisis is being used to push forward the plans to eliminate the private trader. Show trials and the demonstrative closing down of businesses are intended to divert popular anger from the planners to the "capitalists" —as though the small trader, who is dependent on the (largely nationalised) wholesale trade, and whose supplies have for some time been cut down in favour of the state shops, could be made responsible for the plan's miscarriage.

The new line, particularly as it affected wage policy, was in fact partly financed by inflation; the concessions made in 1953 went further than they would have done on a strictly economic calculation. The planners are not just using empty words when they talk of excess purchasing power. In comparison with the restricted volume of goods available, too much money is in fact reaching the pockets of consumers. In little more than a year, the note issue rose by one milliard (nearly 25 per cent) without a corresponding improvement in supplies. What cannot be spent on food, since it is not there to be bought, goes on small luxuries. Restaurants and "nightspots" are crowded, which seems more typical of inflation than of prosperity.

But any attempt to tackle this inflation is misplaced so long as the production of consumer goods is so mercilessly sacrificed to an over-ambitious programme for heavy industry. Feverish industrialisation produces those very economic phenomena which the economy campaign, with its rationalisations and wage reductions, is designed to eliminate; and so the crisis is made permanent.

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Philip O'Connor

Memoirs of a Public Baby

HAD Mother had more of British weight, she could have availed herself of what advantages there were in being a Fallen Gentlewoman, or Gentlewoman in Distressed Circumstances. But her infantile giggle, her chronic lack of British seriousness spoiled her chances. Her paternal grandfather, of a noble Irish family, because of some indiscretion had left the country and started life anew under an assumed name in Burma. My mother's father had married a Dutch woman (whose family had provided a Statdholder). The family prospered in Rangoon, and later in Bombay and Mysore. I have met only three of them. One was an aunt, who fulfilled all the requirements of the "Anglo-Indian" type, and who, incidentally, informed us in a quarrel with Mother that Mother's father (who had married twice) had married a Burmese, that my mother was therefore "coloured"—an explanation offered to account for her social incapacity. This seems possible to me, judging from Mother's physical characteristics: a very dark skin, blue-black hair, eyes whose brown had something of the liquidity of the Burmese, a body slight and nervous—before her later obesity—and a childishness that seems to me to have been different altogether in kind from anything possible in a completely European person, even allowing for a convent and Anglo-Indian upbringing; a childishness and childlikeness that I recognised at once in Burmese and Indians, which is the concomitant of a much "looser" intellectual consciousness.

The second relative was the aunt's daughter, my cousin Polly, a ravishingly beautiful, searingly snobbish girl whose nervous gestures made a continuous act of segregation from other people. This religious caste-consciousness was more pronounced in the third member of the family I met, my cousin Aden. I gained the impression of a man living in a tension that reached the saintly without its moral basis, the race and caste one being substituted.

Mother's family were mostly employed in the Indian Civil Service. She herself was born in Limerick in 1889. My father ("riff-raff," said Mother) was indeed descended from one of the High-Kings of Ireland, and was royal to the extent of being a doctor of medicine who never practised, preferring to live on Mother. He was born in Kerry, educated at Downside Abbey and Oxford. He came of a medical and legal family, other members evidently being more hardworking and successful than he. Mother told me that it had been a steep descent for her from the nobility and grace of his love-letter wooing to his marital practice; he was known as "the cad." I have never seen him; I was told that he said he would like to drown any male child of his issue in a bucket of water. I have a list of his peculiarities learned by rote, from which I cannot reconstruct a person. He had a passion for jewellery, wore many rings, was constantly changing his watch, and even wore, like modern Americans, a kind of bracelet—and a monocle. He had a passion for cleanliness,

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unbalanced to the extent of making him search all corners of a room in hotels and command the chambermaid to sweep again if he found any dirt therein; Mother was openly dirty. He drank milk, was a total abstainer from alcohol—on æsthetic, not moral grounds. And he liked to travel as much as possible, preferring of all countries China. Once he joined a monastic order as a lay-brother; after staying a year he left to become a stage-manager (perhaps at the Kennington Theatre). He was frequently and quite openly unfaithful to Mother, bringing home his lady friends; my sister vaguely hinted at homosexuality as well. Mother told me that he had not volunteered for military service in the 1914 war (unlike her brothers, one of whom, my Uncle Sebastien, was awarded the V.C.) but had shamefully been dragged into service as a naval surgeon, and was torpedoed in the same year—1916; but the Admiralty have not confirmed this, from which it seems possible that he lived on after the war.

For many years I doubted my legitimacy owing to my mother having lived since 1916 for many years—until her death—with "Uncle Haslam," whom I thought I resembled. Mother told me he was a friend of my Uncle Sebastien, and that she had been entrusted to his care on the death of my father. She died in his arms and I presumed an intimacy.

MOTHER had married at nineteen, going from convent and rigidly conventional Anglo-Indian home to the charming and amoral Irish doctor. In her morning gossips with my sister and me in bed she would talk for hours and idealistically of her childhood. She regarded her days of little-girlhood as the ones happiest and morally most right in her life; the essence of them was that she had not been called upon to take up adult responsibilities which she never could understand. Her maturity was a childish, clever masquerade. She giggled in the home circle over her artful attempts to present the dignified front of a "business woman."

But of her married life she spoke very rarely, and always in a voice of as much maturity—synonymous for her with grief—as she ever attained. Flatly, as though brushing away a troublesome insect or clearing up a mess on the floor, she said "he was a cad," etc. Yet hints of his having beglamourised her were also there; he was a skilful surgeon, his taste in clothes was superb, and his wooing—his letter-writing especially, as I have said—was romantic. My sister told me with great admiration that Mother had only twice had sexual intercourse with him: once for her and once for me. Mother believed in virginity alleviated with grubby scandal. She liked to be "shocked." Her childishness, her antisexualism, her personal adoration of the Virgin Mary, her personal dirtiness, her passion for black coffee, and her religious love for her mother—all appear to me to be elements of an act of withdrawal from the society of her social "equals." A chronic snob in a girl-guide way, she felt at ease only with the working-classes, and lived with them, in their dirtiest slums, for the happiest years of her life after my father had left her—or she him. She had a personal loathing for the English middle-classes, particularly for their women; they profoundly embarrassed her.

My sister was born—in a train entering Paris, I was told—seven years before me. She was named Desirée, and spoke always in terms of the greatest affection for my father. The three travelled continuously in the seven years before my birth, Mother and my grandmother, it seems, providing the funds; for my mother was insistent in telling me that my father never worked. The end of her money and his affection may have coincided, about 1916 and my birth. Being a superstitious Irish mother, portents of my future greatness, at which I have not enough happiness to smile, were there. A gipsy, she told me on her deathbed, had prophesied fame for me. But it has occurred to me that the undoubtedly special way in which she treated me may be as much or more explained by the illegitimacy I suspect.

I was delivered (under the care of the King's Physician, Mother said) during a

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zeppelin raid on London, but in Leighton Buzzard. Mother had gone there to avoid the raids; I was also expected to be twins, and was a little premature; the birth was, she said, extremely difficult. She provided me with four names that sound like the overture to a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, of which I was extremely proud until a strangely late age (my thirty-fifth year). We moved, as soon as she had recovered, to Pinner, and thence, shortly afterwards, to Yeovil. She must have had some small capital left, for she there founded the "Somerset Cigarette Agency," and even secured a government contract for her horrible cigarettes—she admitted that—to the Army. I remember going to a red-carpeted workroom of the company near the Savoy Hotel, sitting on her lap and placing paper and tobacco in one end of a tube and extracting a cigarette at the other. She employed, I believe, twenty-four women.

IT WAS down the large flight of stone steps from our house in Yeovil, which seems grand in retrospect, that I ran to offer my madly-beloved toy piano to passers-by, and later my train; I distinctly remember, with a pride made understandable by a distinct change in character since, a natural occurrence of the idea of giving away with that of love for the object given. However, analysis of the action would, no doubt, invalidate my pride—I don't know. I have become so mean that I regard that time as one of an illumination and sociality which has not recurred. But later, in my "wealthy" period, I remember giving profusely to strangers and to people I secretly disliked, but never to those I liked or loved; from them I took.

I had a nurse called Dora. The cigarette company failed at the end of the war, or just before perhaps, to be replaced by another venture called "Sebasdes Products Ltd." (a portmanteau word from my sister's and my name) that had a shorter life in the making of perfumes and shampoos. The stationery and the remembered glory of this lasted longer, however, testifying to the greater ambitiousness of the undertaking. My mother then fought "the great bank case" against one of the "big five," lost, and with it Uncle Haslam's few thousands. She was declared bankrupt. The tin box of the case followed us for years, and the bank joined her collection, accumulating steadily and methodically down the years of her business failures, of "crooks."

In 1919 we went to France—Mother, my sister, Dora my nurse, and I. We crossed at night—I can still vaguely share the night, thirty-six years ago, see the slightly-lit bottoms of the smoke-plumes going up into a low cave of dark. The crossing was rough, and for more than ten years, I should imagine, I was proud of not being sick. We went to Paris, into the house of a Madame Antoine. Madame Antoine is the first woman whom I can remember pressing me to her bosom in an affection I would call technical, not real—possibly I resented all bosoms but my mother's; it was maybe in exploration of a symbol of this new bosom that I split open one of Madame Antoine's brightly-coloured silk cushions that abounded in her colourful, small flat. I was astonished at her anger, and shocked at Mother's reproof which I saw was, again, "technical." "Business"—to be Mother's continual excuse for getting out of England—must probably have taken us to Paris; how it thence took us to Wimereux, near Boulogne-sur-Mer, I cannot imagine. We rented an apartment near the level-crossing, and played in it a phonograph, which much interested me. There was a little garden, which was a place of peace; but we moved soon to Madame Tillieux' teashop in the Rue Carnot, the main street of the little town down which the small trams rumbled. The teashop was brisk, clean, and very noisy whenever the front-door opened.

IT WAS at Madame Tillieux' that I first became aware of our family as being distinct from the rest of the world, and in that way weaker; an observation heightened by the dawn of Mother's new economic manner, one of babyish astuteness, God-approved and Virgin Mary-advised, in avoiding the sinful clutches of creditors. The creditors were distant, but hung as an atmosphere of the

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world about us, making us suspiciously cosy together, strangely lonely alone, very polite to strangers become remote. We were still respectable, had a nurse for me and a comfortable apartment—though smaller than that in the house by the level-crossing. But the battle had been joined; the demonstration of that was Mother's two manners, of serenity and love with us, of something diminished with others. "Home" faintly acquired the aspect of a refuge; the first instance of this I can remember was the pleasure with which Mother, in a day glorious, with us all on the downs by the sea, seemed to snatch from a hostile world mushrooms and cook them, at home, like a child playing Red Indians. These mushrooms were different food—I could not know how, but I could see that they were eaten with a mysterious relish, and in a strange apartness from the world. Vividly, the room was a little darker from a light that was a little brighter in it.

Mother told me one day in Wimereux when I was four that she would go away, but would be back very soon. But she was away for two years. When she returned I had become a revolutionary against her, my country; I had adopted Madame; who was also to go.

Madame shone from the skin and the bright surface of small, kindly, and shrewd eyes, which expected the amount of affection properly available from humanity, and the rest—in a mist of confusion strictly timed and placed—from God. So, she did not give me a conscience. She gave me affection and "tartines." Hers was my first taste of working-class economy and reliability in emotion by which standard I was forced to measure, to my discomfort, the squandered and unequal manifestations of it from other classes. From four to six I "knew where I was," led a normal, satisfied life as far as my excitable temperament allowed; my life after that co-operated destructively with my temperament. That is why, I suppose, I have not advanced beyond the idealisation of working-class manners of life that was fashionable in the thirties among many Left intellectuals, and is not so now; and I do not propose to "advance."

But Madame was on the way up, from peasant to teashop proprietress; her children were in the current to increase that elevation, but only two, Jean, a student at the university, and Jeannette were passive to the dictate of advancement. Pierrot, my playmate, sulked against it, and eventually sentimentalised his way out of it; Berthe took refuge in the alternative, the forgivable shadow, religion.

Pierrot was the youngest child, about three years my senior, of whom I grew fond; Berthe was next in seniority of age, who was my little mother, and whom I loved easily; Jeannette was next, more beautiful than plain Berthe, sharp, addicted to sharp playing on the piano, in which the notes were extracted like teeth from a sweeter silence. Jean I saw little of.

Jeannette had learned of the expressions of emotion as communication; Berthe suffered them as the impediment. Jeannette's facility in communication fed on what there might have been to communicate; she seemed meaningless. Berthe's pregnancy of the matter was eternal; but mere constipation, had it been hers, would have been more attractive than her sister's garrulity of the heart.

THERE were three "*salles*" on the ground floor of Madame Tillieux'. The front, on the street, was of course the shop selling cakes and confectionery, with whirled smells of chocolate, ice cream, cakes, that one eats with one's nose. The floor was tiled; here the most professional of cake-eaters sat at a few tables; those straightforward connoisseurs who didn't have to hide themselves to enjoy. The second *salle* was dark, parquet-floored, with a large aspidistra in one corner; here were commonly found the English, whispering like rather harsh mice, excessively confidential with each other; one—I—tended to walk through them briefly into our living-room, tiled-floored also with a large round stove at the end of a long, angled chimney that went up to the ceiling to the left of the large portrait of heavy-moustached M. Tillieux; in evening prayers we faced him, our chairs in an arc round the stove, and Madame droning her "*Marie mère de Dieu.*" I remember the perfunctory way in which she an-

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nounced us all, collectively, as sinners. She might have been turning a mangle for the prayers to come through.

The three *salles* were also, of course, three stages in dressing for the public outwards to the shop and divesting oneself of urbanity and abstract affection on the return journey. We heard the bell—sometimes. "*Va, Berthe*" —"*Mais non Mama, 'suis occupée*" and the chosen spider would assume a carriage of ease and amiability, hospitable. I noticed the rather slow way in which Madame turned from one group of cakes to another, giving an impression of their goodness (a true one). Returning, if it had been Madame, she would sometimes, at the portal to the living-room, scratch herself, lifting up her skirt to do so: "*en famille*," she would say, as when she would lift a bone from her plate to chew the meat. This endeared me to her; I was depressed at refined Jeannette's shocked "*Maman!*"

The strangers, the customers, were sometimes superlatively delightful in their ignorance of what they wanted, in the bright crosscurrents of their stomach-directed inspiration; you might almost hear them eat parenthetically what they ordered, and regurgitate it quickly in favour of something else. It appalled me that they could have so much, whereas I and Pierrot would have, say, one *gâteau-bateau* on Sunday, a couple of *sucre d'ors* or *Pierrot-gourmands* in the week. Why not everything—why not? The smells joined the order of higher things. *That* was abstraction; not the relation of the smell to the taste. I was much presented, of course, to the English patrons, as "*un petit anglais*" who'd become French; I satisfied Madame's patriotism, and learned to tell people that I was French. The establishment was beautifully clean, though not so much the dark, heavily furnished middle room where the English went. In the living-room great squelchy washings took place every week, from a bucket of yellow soap of a tantalisingly delicious, unforgettable smell that went to one's heart, or goes there in the long journey back. The clang of the bucket and dull thump of it contrasting make a bell for me of the whole appearance and smell combined.

THE little bee-like trams, shuddering in their rigidity and making a noise like a smithy, would with bells clanging and wheels shrieking rush to their terminus past the door at the end of the town. Some of the happiest times of my life were spent in these trams, on our weekly cake-buying expeditions to Boulogne, at the expensive *pâtisserie* where another refined, rouged, silked Madame would pinch my cheek and appear to expect a marvel from me, perhaps a verbal one, and reward me for her usual disappointment with a cake. We would embark outside the shop with two high piles of empty cake boxes strung together; on the very great days we would be arrested along the cliff-edge, where it was low, by the "*grand 'marée*," when the waves would sweep over the tram, raining on the windows. We would always, in any case, wait for our sister tram, who would cautiously nuzzle her way up the hill and pounce into view like a sly cat, and then, jerkily, awkwardly, like a courting one, sidle towards us to our left, the far blue sea on our right, its little waves crinkled in even ripples, the sun dazzling us on them—then the little trams stood out like two exploratory vehicles in a far-away place—the telegraph wires hummed, too. We would then groan forward. In Boulogne the tram-bell never stopped, rattling through such a press of people that it seemed impossible not to run them over, which the driver didn't seem much to try to avoid; the mackerel women were very quick. It was something, in midsummer, for these trams to have attached to them open trailers: they were suddenly wiped from my admiration later when I saw Belgian trams, with two or three trailers, and a stove in them; heavy, dark. Trams were wonderful until I was conveyed in the London hearses.

But the Boulogne tram hardened much later, at fourteen, when, with my guardian visiting Boulogne, Madame asked me to go home with her for a while in one: I thought she wanted to abduct me. The tram went cold, its cream pillars hard and strange; mere wood, and the whole vehicle not the one I

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had known, but "Englished" out of all recognition. The tram went away without me, and Madame without me, pulling a thin thread from my heart; she had then become small, dumpy, tragically a stranger, another.

Madame's affection for me in bed at night —I usually slept with her—was materialistic. She pinched my bottom giggling, which I didn't like, going nervously to the edge of the bed. Her lack of "*politesse*" was to me her dearest quality, or an expression of her warmth and naturalness, which is the same. Good manners seemed icy after her, as cruel to their exponents as to others, making of any place an arid no-man's-land; self-conscious bad manners, of course, did the same. Every quarter-day Madame wept before the landlord (it seemed to be regular); I was of use to her on such occasions, sometimes my shoulder supporting her bereaved widow's hand, and also to increase her "*J'ai quatre enfants, M'sieu*" to "*J'ai cinque.*"

Furthest from my affections was the shop, and nearest, the chicken-run in the backyard whence, when I collected eggs, it was hard to get me out. I wanted to sleep there, I remember telling Madame, or Maman as I called her now. I loved hens; I think their eccentric movements betokened a lack of calculation that established their innocence and, therefore, their beauty. Furthermore my first consciousness of a perfect shape was a boiled egg revealed by the cleanly lifting veil of steam from it—in a night-light. Or gaslight—night-light appeared as the second lovely shape; it floated on a glass of water, a yellow, rather still flame on water that was "holy," like the Christmas crib. Apart from the hens I loved Folette, an ageing bitch who lay in the sun whenever possible, and had a moist red nose and moist eyes, reddened. The quality that hens and Folette had was the opposite of the organising drive possessed by all grown-ups; the fearful need to raise railings round behaviour and emotions, and thoughts as well; there is little need to confuse this vice with a respect for law. It represents merely a terror of policemen.

The beach at Wimereux is white and wide. The sea spreads, as elsewhere, from one's feet to the sky. Behind it the dunes rise mournfully, where the land seems to fall in mounds of noble and desolate sorrow, mere technical grass shivering in the mildest wind. By the dunes, between them and the tiny river reaching the sea, was a rusty railway trolley. Pierrot and I played on it. I drove it, and have never driven as far actually as I did imaginatively, on an arrow into the evening glow of light of the setting sun, the trolley so still, so obedient. Perhaps as a rehearsal for Reality, the greatest show on earth for which we were even then being prepared, we also crawled through a drainpipe by its side. Pierrot preferred this to me, and understandably became a better citizen.

I REMEMBER that when a brass band circularly standing played hard, a big balloon rose straight in the air; the best brass band was a one-man band who came down the Rue Carnot once a week, a conical brass hat with bells hanging from it tinkling, cymbals crashing as he wagged his elbows together, a big drum sticking out of his stomach which he banged importantly. These were *affaires*; a great *affaire* was Pierrot's first communion, littered with large cakes and people dressed like them, myself and Pierrot (looking mournful) in sailor suits. Such also were our grand dinners, when champagne flowed, half a glassful for me. The table stretched from the shop to the *salle à manger*. Madame was like a harvest moon dishing out the soup. It was then, while I staggered on the floor, that Mother returned after her two years away.

I was smitten by the grandeur of her appearance compared with Maman's; I told her Maman was my mother. But she bought me a scooter, which I criticised to myself because it had no pedal arrangement. She stayed in the old house by the level-crossing. My mother then commenced the work of weaning my affection from Maman. Did I have enough to eat, she enquired, in such a way that I felt forced to say no, because to say yes would have been like hitting her—in such a way did she ask me. Then, did Maman beat me? She had never beaten me, but again I

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said she had. She then complained to Maman of this. Had I said this, demanded Maman? I said yes. Maman flushed. Mother couldn't pay the bill, and felt she had to seduce me back. Suddenly we went off to Calais. I soon felt pleased to be back with Mother, the cosiness of that being wonderful, while Mother did everything she could to make me happy. We went to a hotel, by the Gare Maritime and harbour. The hotel was dirty and smelly, and managed by a pockmarked woman, very gentle and kindly, but whose pockmarked face frightened me; her husband was her employee, and seemed only himself when he fished from the Calais pier. Calais was a level higher in my consciousness. I began to notice, as though "historically," the beam of the lighthouse through our room at night, at irregular intervals, where Mother slept "crucified" between me and my sister. The café below shut late, and was crowded with sailors every night, who drank a lot. Upstairs was a man who ate raw steak—I saw him doing it to my terror, and he offered me some and played vigorously a concertina. The lavatory smelt; I had to pull a handle up which depressed a lid at the bottom of the bowl. Mother took me to a fair. I wanted to ride on circulating bicycles, but daren't because I saw Mother didn't want me to; and my sister won a large doll, and I won nothing. Mother gave me a lot of gingerbread, porridge, and curries; and we went to church, where I again liked the Virgin Mary standing up in a stone boat carrying the baby Jesus.

WE SOON crossed to England, from Ostend, and went to Dean Street. As soon as we were in the train in England from Folkestone—or Dover—I can't remember—I noticed a hush and a comfort which made me sleepy. The carriage was like a moving room, the train was very silent, the speaking was very slow and heavy, and everything was heavy and gentle and enervating, like a land of cows. I remember the red-and-black seated buses (sitting longways), of the No. 48 from Waterloo, where the passengers stared at me because I spoke with a French accent, beginning an acute self-consciousness and irritation. I felt as though I were in a kind of warm soup with the lumps in it touching my face. The speed was absolutely different, and being in London was being on the bottom of a large bowl whose walls were too high to see. The slowness made one's gestures extra quick-seeming, but lighter of significance. One had to gesticulate twice in the same time for a response. Something went from me—the last of France, childhood there, I suppose—with the receding staircase of the bus, a staircase so strangely self-contained, up and down which people could go as though in a house which yet moved away. And I had stepped into somewhere that felt just like nothing. It was Tottenham Court Road, which hasn't changed.

Some number in Dean Street had a two-roomed cellar, the front one with a grating over the area outside its thick, yellow window, over which peoples' shoes rattled. Down there lived Uncle Haslam, or Uncle Jacko, or Poor Bobby Bingo, as he called himself in his many self-commiserating monologues. He was what is called a "character"; one who had been unable to articulate his sensitiveness, and who therefore symbolised the unsaid and everfelt in fetishistic mannerisms. His punishment was Mother. I had not before seen Mother as a punishment.

He was attached to his punishment as the saint to his torment; the punishment distilled his feeling of worth. For he would hold forth; and a child could hear the periods, the literary periods become hollower as they became larger, when Mother, with a needle of mockery, would deflate them and him. Deflated, he was serious, sincere, patient, and extremely logical; inflated, he was curiously, in his weakness of a sense of grandeur, like Mother.

Jacko, as he was also called when one thought of him as a "character," was a very dirty man, on a sentimental sort of principle derived, he thought, from Dr. Johnson, his teacher and model. He cooked and washed in the same saucepan; he cooked on a very dirty Beatrice stove, placed on the unused kitchen range. He wore spats without socks.

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But when he appeared at street-level he looked almost dandyish, favouring city attire. Reminiscent of his happier days, an opera cloak and hat lay on the huge table by the dim window, which supported, with much bric-à-brac, an Oliver typewriter at which their endless joint business letters—Mother providing the matter and Haslam the manner—were composed. Mother was above manner and spelling; Haslam pretended to be above matter—but constitutionally was so. The cellar was used, also, to store a patent pepper-and-salt mixture called Servitas, providing its typical smell.

Business began about nine o'clock at night; I was placed on the folding iron bed, about six feet up in the "air," and supposed to have my first sleep before we moved, around midnight, to Mrs. Mouty's, our lodgings. Mother was never without a business "scheme," each one infallible in its brief life. She thought, for instance, of putting slot-machines in trams, of exporting typewriters to France (secondhand ones), of importing manganese, through Uncle James, from India, of making perfumery, of being an agent for cigarettes abroad. Jacko's protests were purely formal; she easily convinced him of their validity. He followed dazzled by her suave convincingness, her absolute authority; the only sign of doubting herself she ever gave was to giggle when caught out in an obvious bit of irrationality, indicating then, for a brief moment quickly forgotten, that she took none of it seriously. Her dictating voice was special; a suave drone that reminded me, later, of her various city friends' voices; large figures and many cities of the world were cited. In the background loomed one or two luminaries of the business world whom she knew—a Sir Thomas, and another. Haslam reined her zest with grammatical corrections. Her air, I remember, in these dictations, was always of that utter frankness business people affect to each other, of "putting all my cards on the table," of a dramatic—"Look, B., straight: you import so much at so much. . . ." "Frankly, no." She dressed her face in confessional virtue, and seemed unable to dictate her business letters without this expression.

Their quarrels were thunderous. Haslam would often break one of his many pipes—enormous curved briars; he would then say, between clenched teeth—"Got the lot." Or, "Poor old Bingo, poor old Bobby Bingo." Mother would say, "I can't stand it Bobby, I just can't stand it." Once, I remember, I heard it said that she had gone to the embankment to drown herself. Bobby Bingo was white-faced. A constable appeared with Mother distraught. Mother always carried a police whistle (Haslam always had a knobkerry) and was much addicted to soliciting the aid of "constables"—she liked to say, "Constable. . . ." She was five feet high, and they treated her respectfully. We seemed to live on Heinz Tomato Soup and Pritchett's sandwiches. Mother became curiously cruel, beating my sister and Hodge (Haslam's dog, named after Johnson's cat) with the back of a brush; my sister passed on these punishments on my head with her hand when we walked out. We both went to a convent in Leicester Square, where the nuns frightened me. And we hunted bugs, every night, at Mrs. Mouty's—Mother would point them out but would not squash them.

I WAS now seven and was then, as now, a nostalgic "escapist" (a silly word), initially torrentially affectionate and inevitably "disillusioned"—the person was the person, not something or someone else: I was and am rather as one of twins the other of whom has died. Emotionally I never learned from experience, the best I could do being to advance, in stages, to the uprooting of emotion—with little success. I seemed, and seem to have no "self," but am like a cupful of water without the cup, a "self" held in not by the "outer" accoutrements of the personality, but directly by environment and other people into which and whom I can dangerously flow. The first signs of this lack of self—particularly in the sense of possessing a machinery of competition—was being at the mercy of other people's malice. I provoked, more and more as I grew older, cruelty; and was myself cruel in anticipation. I was a pin-

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cushion turning into a hedgehog; the quills were pins left in me by other people, I thought. I preferred strangers to familiars, was coquettish with them; felt I was the master of certain magic, tricks, knowledge. Felt also I knew "the truth"—some important, general truth; my mother had the same conviction, which she interpreted into a rather vulgar omniscience. My mother and I were very alike, not ordinary people; my sister was ordinary. By ordinary I mean conventional, understanding conventions and their people, being fitting in the world. Mother was not, and I was not. We had a shyness terrible to feel, that made us glance aside. To distinguish myself from anyone I am in close contact with, in the sense of preserving an identity, I have to eccentre myself, caricature.

It was at this age that I seemed to have lost any especial affection for my mother. Later, I missed her only symbolically, noticeable only in long-rooted psychological ways. Straightforwardly and in my own mind I left her as easily as she had me, when M. Joseph arrived one evening at Dean Street and opened parley for his adoption of me. I was asked if I would like to live with him; with a true sense of security I said I would, and remember him, as I said so, having the appearance of a "solid," strong man, one who would not be erratic; he had strength and, though by no means rich, a safe income and the reassuring personality of reliable dullness, in contrast to Mother's, that accompanies it. Children can much cherish a reliable dullness, especially if they have experienced a dangerous vivacity in their parent. I saw tears in Mother's eyes, but again that compulsion to leave me—or resignation in so doing—to which I had grown accustomed. I had a subtle feeling of rising a step in some way when I left Mother for Uncle Joseph; of moving from chaos to order; not, as I was eventually to learn, from "life" to lower-middle-class paralysis.

If The Bright Bird

If the bright bird were by me would I grieve
Because they're wild and shy and cannot come
To any call, but fly even from dumb
Beckonings? And would I not give her leave?

Watchers are glad to see: why should they sigh?
They know that birds are free and wish them well.
If mine were here I'd be I cannot tell
How happy whether she would stay or fly.

Oliver Bernard

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Three Poems

THE MASONS

It is a black and ugly wood
Whose boles thrust from the leaden snow
And down the lizard-vaulted rides
The lisping tongues of winter blow;

Crude paw-print, dark-initialled blood,
A single feather red and torn,
Drag-mark by the den-ward feet,
Eye impaled upon the thorn.

The hooded scarecrows on the wire
Turn in the wind to re-arrange
Their graving on the tainted air:
But all's to change and all's to change—

And here he comes with prickled green,
With champagne-bubbling of the sap,
With feathering grain, and trembling fish
That rising suddenly from the lap

Lays great gills on a girl's knee.
And here they come, the masons come,
With leather aprons dusted gold
And hods of seasoned timber, home,

Singing all summer afternoon
To build the temple in the throat,
To help that unclean beast of prey
Forget the blood upon his coat.

And here he comes with harp and crown
And daisies on his long gown
Chanting to the marigolded
Groves like green hands folded,
To help the unclean ravager
With lolling tongue and idle lip
Forget the thick blood in his hair
And the sour guilt of the cold lair
And haunted rubbish-tip.
Behold the shaggy circle in the glade!
But all must fade and all must fade—

Crown and harp upon a tree,
Where lisping tongues of winter blow
The slackened gut, and temples fall
Like midnight on the leaden snow;

The slaughtered masons broken-backed
(They fall who sing to unclean men)
Litter Saturn's sterile tract;
All's, all's to do again . . .

AT CHELSEA

Through the glass window shines the sun,
How should I love, and I so young?
The sparrow whistles on the spray,
The river carries the flowers away.

At Chelsea where the barges lie
The river mirrors the grey sky;
How should I love, and I so young?
How pale and weak the wet roofs shine!
Hope is fierce and argues on,
But I so young and shy to speak.

How thin the spring before the leaves,
How wan the dawn embankment curves!
The sparrow whistles on the spray
With husky winter in his throat.
I am a tree of unripe fruit,
Too hard and green to tempt the beak.

He held my hand and I held his.
He did not ask me for a kiss,
How should he ask, and I so young?
I saw my face in the shining Thames,
Lips splintered like chrysanthemums.
The river carries the flowers away.

Through the glass window shines the sun,
How should I love, and I so young?
The sparrow whistles on the spray.
O my growing-time, have done!

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by Hilary Corke

OISEUSE

INDOLENCE in the window
Propped on white elbow
Nose to pane, eyes idly
Unfocussed beyond infinity,
Far beyond
Mild-wind-twisted,
Lightly in the mild wind twisted,
Blossoms on arbours;
Hand in hair straying
As in wheat long fingers,
Humming between teeth, while out of window
Pale leaves up once pleached alleys sidling
Fallen out of the summer, and she so young and
So busy doing less than nothing whatever
To tap foot twist necklace thrum finger
Stare through pane
(Small wind fluttering)
Then turn indoor singing under breath
In the drowsy gallery
Happy to stand tiptoe to drop kisses in the glass
Compare profiles shade vacant eye
Spin on heel feel skirt swing and involve,
Or by hushed bed
Set all silk gliding till into mirror's arms
Swoon naked radiant,
Till tile and steam
Float heavy thigh on thigh but light in water
Ripples set bright rings sliding on flesh like palms
But of sugar star-fish melting in hot sea
When all the tide-scape dreams . . .
Then by cold walls pricking in hot sweat
Lazily towelling, lazy the pink-stung cream,
Glass beads on taut silk running, oiled, lazy
At the glass table
The hand that swings like a bat in the night of her hair
Blonde night and bat asleep
And the slow rising and falling of silver-back brushes
As on the blonde night of the sand of the beach the silver-struck
Rise and fall of the sea.

Sweet sugar, tender sugar,
Hangs webbed in dreams—
"All night in dreams, but come Sunday
All morning in bed thumbing romances,
Matching *revers*, the barometric skirt length,
Gazelles in Vogue and Love will find a Way,
And Saturday so hot went to pictures

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Straight after lunch and sun all afternoon
Rang red iron on pavement, but there
Cool cradle, ghosts flickering grey . . .
. . . si suy nommée
Oiseuse, la tendre sucrée;''
Leading me, blonde, young, hand in hand
Come Summer Sunday to the cool greenwood
Strolling in perfume as daisies on the bank,
Her egg-shell ringlets set in doves and ribbons,
Melody breaking bubbles up slow throat
Of gold-crest hayfinch in the red-balled tree
Singing for me (as he will sing in her)
Ballades roundels and all dulcet accord
Of feathered harp, Æolian or timbrel,
Of organ, symphony, and all such accord
As blue-flute bull-fiddle or Kaffir piano,
Mouth in her lap to pluck ripe violets
And she asleep
And she asleep after the gentle running
Of hands from hundred to hundred of the skin,
Lolling to her sauntering breathing breast to breast
Or later and am awake and in the clearing
Where the long trees fire their wood-peckers one at another
She's slipped a record on the gramophone
Brought sweetmeats out
And over this fair table in the shade
We are playing chequers . . .

because of the kings, because of the lecturers,
because of the voters and hour-labourers,
because of the earnest neat and never late,
because of the tall policeman at the gate,
because of the politicians, all all
Those standing ones who were too weak to fall

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Francis Watson

Nekropolis

THE finest view in London is reserved for the dead. In almost any continental city a prospect such as that to be enjoyed from the northern heights of Highgate would mean striped umbrellas along a terrace, waiters veering in and out between the metal chairs with new wine or coffee and cream, a band somewhere, a stall where you can buy picture-postcards *and* stamps, and perhaps those little zinc plaques to fix on your walking-stick. Or is it too long since I did the grand tour?

At Highgate there is a terrace, certainly, but the asphalt is bare and deserted. It is in fact the roof of the unique row of early 19th century catacombs, broken midway by the grandiose (1878) mausoleum of the diamond-king Julius Beer. In front of this the catacomb-plan extends into a completely circular way, a fosse with a central hub or rampart from which springs an embowering cedar. Who designed it all, if not Vauban? Who thence led more cells in a corridor descending to the citadel's Egyptian gateway? The only direction for the wanderer is a small wooden board that reads: "To the Columbarium." This turns out to be, as it were, the apartment-house in this colony of private mortuary dwellings, pigeon-holed for the reception of urns and caskets. But there is still no Baedeker for London's Père Lachaise. Only Professor Pevsner, as always, comes to the rescue, finding room in that excellent Penguin handbook on the buildings of London to tell us that the man responsible for it all was Stephen Geary—"also reputed architect of the earliest of London's gin-palaces."

From this orderly crest, fashioned as if it meant something that nobody can quite remember, descends the steep, crowded, and almost unplanned suburb of defunctive dwellings, broken columns, shrouded urns, Celtic crosses, mourning angels, miniature cathedrals, sinking year by year into the springing grass and the climbing briars and the spreading convolvulus. The urban noises come faintly. If you walk here you walk alone. Yet there, beyond a frieze of poplars, the sunshine strikes the dome of St. Paul's and the further verticals of a cross-river power-station. London lies at your feet, and beyond London the sloping Downs to the south. There is a point at which the composition of a funeral obelisk, the line of poplars, and the distant dome startles the visitor with something of a Roman moment.

It seems as though a whole century slept here on the hillside: a hard-working, fairly prosperous middle-class century, the forgotten thousands with the few whose names still echo, however faintly. Mrs. Henry Wood, successful novelist, rests under pink marble. Michael Faraday, pioneer of electricity, has a piously restored headstone. Samuel Cousins, R.A., "beloved by all who knew him," is buried with his parents. An obviously circus lion, prostrate with grief, surmounts the tomb of George Wombwell, menagerist. A bereaved horse droops over an undecipherable inscription. Alfred Hodge was brought hither from Brooklyn to be interred near his family. In

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summer, purple buddleia and untamed sweet peas trail over the grave of Mr. Ambrose Charles Harman, for many years secretary to the Indigent Blind Visiting Society. On the tended grave of the Calvert family, whose sons in two generations went out to New Zealand before the turn of the century, the geraniums and snapdragons are kept bright and tidy year after year. There is a family called Death, but disguised in humble trappings, secret as the Caliph among his subjects. There are flaking quotations from *In Memoriam*, and tender inscriptions to the infant casualties of large families. There is one "to my dear and beloved wife Bonacina, whose departure from life on the 6th of September 1877, in her 26th year, plunged me into the most intense and piercing grief." One aches to have known Bonacina, but not to have lost her.

DOWN to the poplars, all this is that "lumber of soul and spirit" which the occupant of plot 24748, in the newer and more timely-kept section below the trees, declared he had cast aside. If you went up to the janitor at the lower gate, sitting among his cut flowers, he was liable to answer before you spoke. "Karl Marx, sir? First turning on the right, then take the second small path on the left." Each spring, on the anniversary of Karl Marx's death, the narrow track between the graves of the London bourgeoisie became a pilgrim's way.

"Pilgrim" may be objected, just as "service" was carefully avoided for the ceremony that went on around the headstone. But the flowers and wreaths were brought, spilling over to left and right upon the otherwise neglected sepultures of the Collins family and the Copp family, close neighbours in Nekropolis. This investment in the florists' consumer goods may be a deviation, but then what is to be done? Materialism cannot comfortably or respectfully be carried to the grave. The lumber of soul and spirit makes its inopportune claims.

The party from the Soviet Embassy, with their grey gabardine raincoats and their black ties (the local devotees often prefer red), habitually made their anniversary visit in the morning. A few people would hang about for most of the day, one of them with a visitors' book. In the afternoon the crowd began to grow, reaching perhaps a couple of hundred. "Don't walk on the graves, Comrade," says a woman of apparently official standing; and adds, whether in appeasement of the dead or the living: "*They* don't like it. We have enough trouble as it is." At length a straggling procession puffed up the path, with twin-pole banners that made one fancy that the earliest rallies of trade unionism may have looked something like this. It was all rather primitive, and somehow pathetic, but *Pravda* had hyperbole to spare for it next day. There was not even a policeman to invest the occasion with challenge. But the oration (*not* sermon) from some leading Party personality did its best to recall the graveside rhetoric of the unselfish Engels. "One day," we were promised two years ago before the ragged singing of the *Red Flag*, "our efforts will succeed in having the remains of the great founder of scientific socialism removed to some worthier spot."

Those efforts, it seems, have at last surmounted the legal obstacles. What remains of Karl Marx has been rescued by the faithful. The mind turns to another grave, under a plum-tree in the wilder reaches of Highgate cemetery; and another battle with the lawyers and the Home Secretary; and then a disinterment—a rather celebrated disinterment—one October evening in 1869. A great fire was lit beside the Rossetti grave (there must have been more space to work in then than now), and Lizzie Siddall's coffin was raised and opened by the egregious Howell and Dr. Williams of Kennington, while Dante Gabriel waited in Howell's house, nursing the emotions at which biographers have never ceased to guess. It was Dr. Williams who took charge of the red-edged manuscript-book, drenched it with disinfectants, and dried the salvaged Rossetti poems leaf by leaf before the leaping fire. It was Howell, presumably, who started the story of that other fire, the flaming red-gold hair

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which had not ceased to grow in death's kingdom, filling Lizzie's coffin with its burnished glory.

Yet in the end it is not those two Victorian phenomena, Pre-Raphaelitism and Marxism, which feed the strange obsession that the cemetery at Highgate lays upon those who know it well. The elegiac mood is not that of any burial-ground. It is a peculiar climate felt in that steeply climbing upper quarter, the crowded graves tip-tilted by triumphant vegetation, the flowers running back to the wild, the rusting iron doors of the catacombs, the explosion of brief persephone-colour where a family vault has been opened to receive a newcomer: and the rest falling back into the anonymity of innumerable names, with an address in Oxford-street reading as exotically as one in Tasmania. Near the north-east corner where I usually end my walk, the name of Lillywhite is commemorated more eloquently than that of Rossetti or that of Marx. A broken column with a wreath. Two crossed bats. A lethal ball taking, in low relief, the leg and middle stumps. "June 1792–August 21, 1851. . . . The national game of England. . . . A world-wide reputation. . . . This monument . . . the noblemen and gentlemen of the Marylebone Cricket Club. . . . To one who did his duty in that state of life to which it had pleased God to call him."

George Aldis

Portrait of a Woman

(For Susan)

O! do you not see
How her curling hair cascades in milk-soft curves
Like the waves tumbling in abandon
In slow sleek ripples down
The beady beds of foam
And how her crystal-deep eyes form
Pools of blue and green that mirror back the nerves
Of life below the sea

And shimmer in their sunken depth
With the cool cliff-face skin rising up to leafy brows
And how the smooth calm bay of her cheek
Is rivered by the moist chalk
Of salt-laden tears
And how her lips of red coral wear
Away your rocks and shipwrecked manhood? But do not vow
To harbour a subtle death,

O you of the Flesh and the Word
Who are born of the Flesh and make your Word in smoke
And smut and spirit-wasting towns,
Who blast through the clank of trains
Blasting the stone of walls
And Gorgon gates; for she who dwells
In her ocean caves and city-removed is the salt-lake
Of your limbs and Flesh of the Word:

You who go down to the sea
And drown in the mad tides—remember this woman
Who lives in the waves and is Eve of today!

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TABLE TALK

YES, I reflected, as I sat down at the writing table in the Combination Room, that is one of the real social differences between the "educated classes" and the others. We expect to write something every day, a letter, a note, an article, a bit of a book; and we more or less unconsciously take the same kind of interest in the tools of our trade as a good mechanic does. And we are equally easily irritated by the permanent incomprehension of our needs that others display. There is the waste-paper basket carefully and tidily put out of reach of anyone using the writing table; there is the desk-set pen on the left-hand side, which all but the left-handed have to move over to the right. In short, there is the ideal of tidiness held by the great mass of the non-writing classes. And it is profoundly irritating to the writing classes and, perhaps, one of the causes of the alarm with which so many of them look to a mass culture in which the habits, the needs of the writing classes will be even less catered for.

It is not a mere matter of political prejudice. Of my friends, the one who suffers most and most loudly over the unteachability of charwomen, of waste-paper baskets misplaced, books "tidied," papers "arranged," is a most devoted member of the Labour Party and an ex-member of the Communist Party. But all the egalitarian zeal in the world cannot prevent the irritation and alarm bred by the difference in habits and in priorities. For the non-writing classes the irritation itself is incomprehensible, as is the art of writing. For them, the worship of the "book" is magic to be ignored, superstitiously admired, laughed at, or despised. Indeed, in current English, the word "book" is a mark of class division, between those who cling to the old meaning of book and those (a majority and an increasing majority) for whom "book" is any printed matter other than a daily or weekly newspaper. Thus *Reveille* is a book but the *News of the World* is not; *The Weekly Mail* is a book but the *Daily Mail* is not. Of course, for most of those who use the word "book" in this way, book has no other meaning, books in the old sense are not a part of life. But the usage is spreading and spreading upwards; there are hundreds of thousands for whom book has the old *and* the new meaning. And the history of language suggests that the new, mass meaning will win. In that case what will the *literati* use for the old word "book"?

It is not quite an idle question, for this change in the meaning of a sacred word reflects a change in the content of our culture which makes us more uneasy than we like to admit. The old magical prestige of reading and writing is on the decline. In a country like England, as recently as two generations ago, the phrase "I'm no scholar" did not mean a modest disclaimer of being a Gilbert Murray or an A. E. Housman. It meant that you couldn't read. The difference between those who could read and those who couldn't was great and serious; it was the difference between shiftless Tom Lincoln and his ambitious son, Abe; it became the difference between his father and Huck Finn. Today, in England, the melancholy reports from the Army and the criminal courts tell us the same thing; there are plenty of illiterates still. (Many more I note, without comment, in England than in Scotland.) And less and less do we hear the old comforting conservative consolation, that the merits of literacy (for other people) are greatly exaggerated. Less and less do we hear of the wise, old, well-adjusted illiterate peasants of the speaker's youth. There may be a few survivors from Wordsworth's world but they are few. An illiterate "Teddy boy" murderer, or an illiterate in charge of a great and, in his hands, murderous machine, is not a picturesque and reassuring figure. And, at the same time, the illusion that print would set us free, the naïve if attractive belief that universal literacy

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would lead to universal benevolence is dying fast. We look with horror, or with fascinated and pessimistic interest, at the "reading" matter in the hands of the boys and girls, the young men and women we see in tubes and trains and we feel more deeply the shudder bred by the misplaced pen or waste-paper basket.

THE genuine horror at the thought that the British viewing public might be exposed to what it wants to see, was one of the most revealing aspects of the comic controversy over commercial TV. The age of a generally accepted order of taste and a generally aimed-at level of standards has not come and shows no signs of coming. The great age of the "book" in its traditional sense is probably over. The reading and still more the writing classes cannot be supposed to like it. Our speciality that earned for us awe and even money in the days of Pope Silvester II or Dr. Johnson is no longer so much admired. The equivalent of Dr. Johnson's wherry boy is not disposed to wait to be told about the Argonauts. If he reads at all, it is of

"far other worlds, far other seas"

This is no place to start the electric hare of science fiction, to speculate whether voyages to "vacant interlunar caves" are not the modern equivalent of the "tale of Troy divine." What we can be fairly certain of is that the old generally accepted body of literary culture has lost its central place. In part it may be, as M. André Malraux asserted, that we pay more serious attention to the visual arts than, say, Macaulay did. It may be (here I think I am on surer ground) that music has invaded, in France as well as in Britain, the citadel of culture once garrisoned solely by writers and readers. At any rate, it is not merely a question of the decline of the old classical culture, the abandonment of the pretence that we all know Greek or even Latin or that we are where Shakespeare was. It is more than that. Mere literature is no longer the way to power, prestige, or even positions of considerable emolument, much less to superiority over the vulgar herd. An era in cultural history, that only began with the Renaissance, is coming to an end.

There is more to it than the decline of the "old, fortifying, classical curriculum"; the whole place of literature in education is questioned. Sometimes the questioning is done from a rationally "cultural" standpoint. Scientists may well smile—or scowl—at the illusion, given candid expression recently in Oxford, that their conversation is likely to interrupt the feast of reason and the flow of soul that marks classically-dominated high tables. Metrics can be as baffling and boring a subject of general conversation as electronics. As more and more bright boys at school go over to science, the distribution of general ability in universities will alter, as well as the distribution of revenue and prestige. The don of the old school may be as doomed as the mandarin of the old school in Mao's China. It is "twilight in the Forbidden City" for more than quondam imperial tutors. Even the old utilitarian argument for literary culture as an education for government, has come under powerful attack from such specialists in the new disciplines as Dr. Thomas Balogh. His account of the origins of our civil service training may be too simple, but his doubts as to its relevance are not. Much of what we confidently exported to India as culture is unmarketable, as irrelevant to the situation and needs of the new nations as were the Latin mottos and the pomp of heraldry that Macaulay objected to exporting to Calcutta more than a century ago.

These are melancholy reflections to entertain on a chilly summer day in Cambridge. How much the little tricks of the donnish trade seem irrelevant as the jets roar overhead and the comics pour off the presses! Men and women haven't changed much, but do we see them through obsolescent spectacles, with our appropriate tags and our old-fashioned literary politics?

"For things like these what decent man
Would keep his lover waiting?"

Who indeed? Or who will note my little quotations and misquotations? Are we like the young man in *Crome Yellow* whose admirably apt tag had no audience?

The old literary culture sinks. Are we ready to depart? I'm off to college, ready to move the waste-paper basket and the pen again.

D. W. Brogan

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Art

A Blot on the Scutcheon

THE Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome is a vast and pompous building situated on the northern outskirts of the city, near the zoological gardens, and well out of sight of the competing monuments of antiquity. Here the Congress for Cultural Freedom recently assembled an "itinerant exhibition" of paintings by young artists from eight countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States. There are 165 paintings by 44 artists; most of the artists were born in the twenties, and most of the pictures painted within the last five years.

A cross-section, therefore, of the younger generation in the Western world. Its claim to be representative depends, no doubt, on the machinery of selection employed. Eight national delegates were chosen, for the most part directors of their respective galleries of contemporary art (Sir John Rothenstein was the British delegate, Monsieur Jean Cassou the French delegate, Mr. Andrew Ritchie the American delegate, and so on). A factious critic might argue that the younger generation, if left to themselves, might have made a different choice of representative artists, but an emergent generation is rarely conscious of itself, and has no machinery for becoming self-conscious. The older generation, for all their prejudices, are more naturally aware of new tendencies (just as parents recognise the peculiarities of their children long before those children are self-conscious personalities). It is difficult to see what better method of selection could be devised, though the selectors themselves would be the first to admit that their choices were not free from personal preferences. In the case of Great Britain, for example, any knowledgeable person might have selected six painters that would not have tallied in any one case with Sir John Rothenstein's choice (Norman Adams, Diana Cummings, Alan Davie, Martin Froy, Edward Middleditch, and Alan Reynolds). But suppose we each make our ideal list—would it then differ *in general character* from the actual list? I do not think so. It might have included an abstract painter—but this would merely have brought it more into line with the lists from other countries.

Not that abstraction, in the usual meaning of the term, is a characteristic of this younger generation of painters. Of the purism, or absolutism, that we associate with names like Mondrian, Ben Nicholson, or the recent work of Victor Pasmore, there is hardly a trace. Instead we have various forms of the formless—paintings that look a scraped palette, arbitrary scribbles in colours that have the dramatic flourish of a signature, and do indeed signify a personality, and nothing but a personality. This type of painting, which has been given the name of *tachism* (French tache = stain, spot, blot) is the only face that the atomic age presents to the world—a face of blank despair, of shame and confusion. Alan Davie, among the British exhibitors, is the representative of this new tendency, but we find it in all the countries exhibiting, and in most countries it is the predominant tendency. A survey of exhibitions recently held in Paris yields no less than one hundred such painters. Two of the three prizes awarded by the Rome jury went to painters of this kind —to Gianni Dova, who was born in Rome in 1925, and to John Hultberg, born in California in 1922.

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Abstractionism or non-figurative art developed from cubism as a process of universalisation; it gradually shed the accidental details of natural phenomena, until an art of geometrical and harmonic relations, as detached as music from realism, became possible. The new art is not entirely original—the early Kandinsky paintings of 1909–12 are unacknowledged precursors—but it differs from cubism and its successors in that it deforms rather than refines the natural object. The identity of this object may be recorded in the title of the paintings—sometimes fancifully: "Altar on the Blue Diamond," "Yellow Heartbeat" (Alan Davie); sometimes directly: "Ant-hill," "Beast," "Head," "Cane Boxers" (Dova); "Winter," "Night Fantasy" (Hultberg). If the plastic mass of paint is not actually inspired by an object, it is manipulated until it can be associated with an object, either by virtue of its silhouette, or by some suggestive detail (an eye or a limb). The work of Jean Dubuffet, recently exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, is an example of this variety. But the recognition of the object is not essential: if the painting has any phenomenal significance, it is only like a signpost, which tells us where the inspiration came from, or where it might possibly be expected to lead us. Meanwhile it lies in our way, an object as stubborn as a rock or a tree-stump. We are invited to inspect its pattern of lichen, its veins of quartz or obsidian; and perhaps we may experience a dynamic force, a mana, a magic, that has somehow been communicated to the shaped form as it passed through the alembicating mind of the painter.

The odd thing is that an art so personal in its origins should be so universal in its distribution. It is sometimes said that it all began with the American painter, Jackson Pollock, who dribbles paint from pierced cans over a canvas laid like a carpet on the floor, and only stops when the arbitrary result acquires some significant pattern. But Leonardo already recognised the fascination of such formless forms, and in France painters of this kind like Fautrier, Dubuffet, and Michaux have an independent origin. It is just possible that the widespread use of the Rohrschach test in experimental psychology may have had something to do with the origins of the movement, for that test showed how much (and what various) significance could be read into an apparently meaningless shape—if only we tried. It seems quite clear that the average reaction to a painting by Fautrier or Dubuffet is of exactly the same kind as the average reaction to a Rohrschach blot. But is it necessarily an æsthetic reaction? Can a blot be elaborated into a work of art?

THE mental reactions provoked by the Rohrschach blots prove that the creation of a blot-like painting (with infinite possibilities of informal variation, and with all the additional power given to it by colour and texture) is not necessarily nonsensical. A blot can be beautiful, and a painting by Dova is very beautiful. But when we make such a statement, are we stretching an already ambiguous term beyond all reasonable limits? A few hundred yards from the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna is the Villa Borghese, and there we may find famous works of art by Bernini and Titian for which "beautiful" has a different connotation. A few hundred yards in the opposite direction is the newly arranged museum of Etruscan art, the Villa Giulia, and there we find another type of beauty, and one more likely to arouse our contemporary sensibility to enthusiasm. It is our sensibility that is fickle, and some external magnetism sends it wavering round the compass of creative possibility. The particular magnetism that has exerted its power in these past ten post-war years is negative: a vacuous nihilism that renounces the visible world, and even the inner world of the imagination, and scribbles a graph of its uncertainty on the surface of a blank consciousness.

But can we seriously compare a blotch of colours, however powerful its sensuous and even psychic evocations, to an Etruscan bronze or Bernini's "Apollo and Daphne"? Contemporary æsthetics is very accommodating, but we must make a fundamental distinction between objects that are imaginative and objects that merely evoke images. In the latter case there has been no exercise of the shaping power of a mind: an unshaped object enters the consciousness and, as we contemplate it, we (the spectators) make our associations, let our fancy play round it—each spectator becomes an artist, and each is creating his own work of the imagination. But the object that sets this process going is not in itself necessarily a work of art.

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It would seem, therefore, that an arbitrary act of expression (as when we deliberately make a blot on a sheet of paper) is not sufficient to constitute a work of art: there must be an element of control, of shaping, though this may be undeliberate, as when an already shapely poem or visual image arises spontaneously in the mind. But the point to insist on is that spontaneity is not in itself a guarantee of beauty or vitality—a formal element must be present in what is spontaneously revealed.

This still leaves open the whole problem of what constitutes æsthetic form. The blotchers might maintain, quite correctly, that æsthetic form is not necessarily measured or metrical form—that there exist irregular forms that are of undoubted æsthetic appeal. Chinese art—oriental art generally—provides many examples, whilst in Europe the Rococo movement was an assertion of the æsthetic validity of such irregular forms. The word "rococo" is said to be derived from the French *rocaille*, and rockeries and grottoes were fashionable extensions of a deeper love of the formally irregular. Rococo ornament is sometimes as wildly arbitrary as a painting by Hartung or Mathieu, but the Rococo artist never claimed for it a more than decorative function. Rococo painting sometimes breaks out of its frame, as in Baciccia's fresco *The Triumph of the Name of Christ*, in the Gesu church in Rome—though Baciccia (1639–1709) is too early to be more than a precursor of the Rococo style. In a painting by Fragonard or Watteau, rococo signifies no more than an open form, a composition that is imaginatively extendable beyond the rectangle of the picture's frame. By contrast, some of the blotch-paintings of which we are speaking are self-contained, monolithic, and have no reference to the rectangle of the canvas, which is merely a place where the painting "happens."

THERE is little purpose in longing for a type of art that has no sympathetic relationship to the prevailing "spirit of the age." Consciously or unconsciously the artists will refuse to supply it. Those who demand a return to realism, or to classicism, should first demand a return to sanity in economics and politics, a return to idealism in philosophy and to moderation in everything. Not that art is a direct expression of such conscious states of mind. Art springs from a deeper source and is prophetic. It expresses a sense of dissatisfaction with normal concepts of reasoning, with the conventional reality presented by newspapers, novelists, and historians. Always in each epoch, the artist has been seeking a new orientation in a world grown indefinite and muddled—refocusing his sensibility on images that have grown dim and indistinct.

The new images presented by the younger artists are not indistinct for lack of focus: they are authentic symbols of chaos itself, of mind at the end of its tether, gazing into the pit on the other side of consciousness. This is not the Nothingness of the existentialists, but the Unconscious of the psychoanalysts. To attempt to reach this forbidden region is not unknown in the past; and in the recent past the surrealists came back with authentic discoveries. But surrealist painting was like the effort of remembering a dream: the images were the product of unconscious activities that had an arbitrary origin (in the psychosis of the individual artist, for example): they were seized on the confines of consciousness and, however much an André Breton might preach the doctrine of pure automatism, they were not automatic because they were the product of the dream (or the day-dream), and that, as Freud has shown, is a purely deterministic mental activity. The successors to the surrealists, these artists without a generic name, without an identity, are much more genuinely automatic. They deliver themselves, not to the unconscious forces of the imagination, but to something as irresponsible as an angry gesture. In fact, their painting is instinctive, a reflex activity, completely devoid of mental effort, of intellection. As such, it may possess vitality, but never beauty. Beauty is not rational, but it always bears the marks of intellection— that is to say, of harmonies and proportions that can be analysed and intellectually appreciated. The artist must not deliberately create these values (that leads to academicism and death): he has a natural feeling for them, a disposition (perhaps innate, perhaps acquired by discipline) to make automatic use of them.

The automatism of the instinctive painter has no such natural limits: it is an emotional earthquake and the seismograph it leaves behind tells us only what happened to an individual sensibility at a certain moment.

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We do not even re-experience the earthquake —we merely observe the record of its force and duration.

Once in possession of this instinctively created graph, the artist can begin to elaborate it consciously. A Mathieu or a Soulages leaves his seismograph untouched: a Dubuffet or a Dova plays about with it—adds a vivid touch of colour here and there: scribbles in a suggestive line or two, even a recognisable feature, an eye or a breast. A "monster" may emerge—an idol or a "presence." Hence the claim, which Michel Tapié makes, for the *magic* quality of such paintings. We are fascinated, even terrorised, by the mysterious power that emanates from the object created by "the artist." But that, it may be said, depends on the spectator's sensibility (a sensibility that is in no sense æsthetic). Some people see ghosts, or receive telepathic messages: others do not. Some people, in the same way, respond to a vaguely suggestive mass of paint. We may envy them, but at the same time suspect that the experience has nothing to do with art.

BUT also at the same time we must remember that beauty has never been an all-inclusive principle of art. Combined with it, at times completely replacing it, is the alternative principle of vitality. Beauty takes us out of life, to contemplate eternal values; vitality puts us at the centre of life, to experience its essential quality, its source and power. There is an essential dynamism in some of the paintings of this new type, and before we react with scorn or fury, we should consider whether a willing submission to such forms of expression might not leave us with a heightened sense of reality. At least, such art is not tired, feeble, as was the art at the end of the 19th century; nor is it merely destructive, like dadaism or a good deal of surrealism. It has much in common with the futurism of the period immediately preceding the First World War; but futurism was more conscious of its environment, machine-conscious, politics-conscious. The new art is conscious of nothing but the artist's own personality, and with an urgent sense of desperation seeks the principle of vitality in introspection, in subjectivity. Previous epochs of vital art, such as the Palæolithic, or the Viking, or the Scythian, sought vitality in external life, usually in animals. The self, one feels, may not be a very constant source of vitality: it is subject to self-distrust and despair. But such is really the challenge of the new movement in art: to feel the pulse of vitality within one's own consciousness and then to convey the felt rhythms in graphic form.

Herbert Read

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Letter from ISRAEL

A Shepherd's Notebook

WHEN I was young, and after I had studied the Bible for a number of years, I began to have serious doubts about the truth of many of its incidents. Not that I had any theological qualms or entertained heretical ideas about basic tenets: God was entirely plausible because he was exactly like an English teacher of ours, who would coo mellifluously like a sucking dove and within five minutes strike a boy with such force that no one would have been surprised if water had gushed out from him as from the rock in the desert.

Nor did my youthful scepticism spring from inability to believe in the miracles of the Bible. These were so fantastic that I accepted them without question. The difficulty lay not in the major miracles, but in the minor technical problems which were passed over in a sentence and proved an endless source of worry to my inquiring mind. How, for example, could Solomon's workmen fashion all the temple without using iron of any form, neither in implements nor in construction? And how could Noah feed all the animals of the earth, two of every kind, for forty days in the ark? The birds and other eaters of grain presented no problem, but what about jackals, lions, and hyenas, who required meat? This is not to mention the enormous problem Noah had of accommodation. One of my favourite childhood hobbies—it was more than a game—was to design an ark capable of floating and holding as many animals as possible within the allotted space of three hundred cubits length. The biggest problem was presented by the giraffes, and I remember drawing up, after much calculation, a plan for a sliding roof which could be pulled aside to allow space for the giraffes' necks, the ceiling of the upper room being reserved for sloths, bats, and other animals which hang upside down.

What I found most difficult to understand, however, was the way in which simple men of humble occupation were suddenly called upon by the prophets to become kings and rulers of Israel. Gideon was summoned while he "threshed wheat by the winepress," Saul as he sought the missing asses of his father. And David, greatest king of Israel, was a simple shepherd when the day of his destiny fell upon him. Yet he won great battles, outwitted masters of tactics, defeated large armies. Where did he derive his knowledge of military strategy?

This was the question which puzzled me more than any other in the Bible. I was not to have an answer for many years, not until I came to Israel and took up David's first profession in the same land where he had tended his father's flock. It is often so in life: the bigger questions have to remain mysteries until the smaller ones have been painfully tested on your own body. No one can hope to understand the 45th chapter of Jeremiah until he has himself tried to change the world and realised that it is like pushing Mount Carmel with one finger. And so I had to wait to discover how David knew about battle tactics until I had walked in his footsteps.

It came to me then, watching the quick skirmishes of the flock round the most succulent grain, their sudden wheels and turns throwing up a cloud of dust across the path, their sly approaches to a forbidden plot, until one, two, and finally the whole battalion of sheep poured on to it in irresistible waves. These were the manœuvres of battle, and the whole work of a shepherd was the daily outwitting of his sheep's tactics.

It was not difficult against the background

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of the Judaean mountains, blue changing to soft purple in the afternoon light, to imagine David dreaming, his thoughts already attuned to music and metre, seeing before him a battlefield and the clash of two mighty armies in the scurry and flow of the sheep, with himself the captain over all.

SONG

How pleasant it is to lie in the sun
back against a bale of hay deliciously pricking
watching the sheep move beside and over you
slowly together, an army of jaws.
People who walk past along the road
think I am idling
but they know nothing: my mind is
furiously at work, spotting two crows
making love
in the long grass, a summer flower just
budding
and new to me; the fig trees are heavy and
soon
I shall climb them and rob at my leisure.
And in the next field men working bare-
chested,
lifting the heavy hoes as with emblems of
war
and letting them thud to the earth
biting and tearing it.
At every move sweat spurts from them,
from the underground river of fatigue.
I love men working, and can watch
them for hours.

I CAME to Israel from South Africa in February 1949. (Why this had to be done is beyond the telling of it now.) I arrived to find a country where a thin scab of uneasy peace was slowly shutting out the vivid gash of war; was met at the airport by a blue-and-white official who bade us "Welcome" in biblical Hebrew and simultaneously deluged us with a choking cloud of very modern D.D.T.; and was whisked away at night by an antiquarian truck past shivering tents and orange-groves to one of eight wooden huts on a barren hill near Nazareth which was my settlement and where I was to live.

The first night in a strange house is usually a restless one; how then does one sleep the first night in a new country! One had courted and wooed and won as truly as one can ever be said to have won, and now the honeymoon had come and the time for the closeness and feel of body's length on flesh of land, and still she held herself aloof and veiled her charms in my presence. And so I fell asleep unsatisfied; for one cannot consummate a country in a night. I awoke next morning with a flood of power in my veins.

I knew my course now, ate a hearty breakfast, and went to look for the person in charge of work.

I found him in the poultry-house.

"I want to work," I said. "What can I do first?"

He looked me up and down with a sly, experienced look, stroked his shaggy beard, and sucked between tobacco teeth.

"Relax," he said casually. "This is hard labour for life—first take a little parole. Go round and see the country, pick up a bit of the language, come back in a week or two and you'll be ready then to start your sentence."

"But I don't want to waste time," I began with a rush—then stopped.

The look of tired scorn from his creased eyes was withering.

"Another one of these young idealists!" he seemed to say, and his voice came faintly down from the cold Olympian height of three months' previous residence.

"Listen, take my advice: I've been here a bit longer than you"—infuriating phrase!—"and when you come back in another week or so there'll still be plenty of work left to do!" with a wave of the hand towards the bare plateau, the naked rocks, the skeletons of buildings unadorned by the simple luxury of walls.

So I packed a haversack and went out on to the throbbing roads and the lonely tracks: bumped in the back of army trucks, stood seven hours in a bus wheezing to the Jordan, slept in a Safed café and a Nazareth jail, saw where Elijah conquered and St. Peter fished, drank Bedouin coffee and Zichron wine, ascended Zion and went down into the valley of the shadow of death, and came back on a cold stormy night to home and to him, prepared to obey and hearken because of his greater wisdom and his love which showed itself in harshness.

"What shall I do?" I asked the next morning.

He looked up from his sorting of the eggs and motioned towards a hammer and a box of virgin nails. "Take that and build a stable."

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As I went out of the door he added, as an afterthought, "for twenty cows."

I took hammer and nails, carried wooden poles and corrugated iron, sought out, with great stealth, cunning bits of timber and brackets for the shelves, and began to shape the stable—I who had never before built anything more substantial than a towered castle on the sands which the ocean tide shattered and eroded to shapeless mud.

And a month's steady work and it was finished and stood triumphant as I knocked an extra nail in with hammering peals of victory—a structure low, rickety, and glorious, a place where a cow might live content, might bear strong calves and pour forth milk in bucketsful, and flap her tail in mighty satisfaction at such a bovine Buckingham, although a little draughty when the east wind blows and dripping a little in a storm.

I called him to see my work, who left the screaming fowls and came to the cow palace where it stood proudly by the roadside. He gazed in silence, reached out a hand and shook it. Four iron sheets floated gracefully off the roof, pirouetted through the air like so many magic carpets, and came to rest some yards away in a cloud of dust.

"Tomorrow you work on the concrete-mixer," was all he said, and turned away.

So tomorrow who should the early sun behold but me steering a wheelbarrow sloppy-full of concrete along a thin plank leading from the foundations of the schoolhouse to the whirling concrete-machine. And this is a metal drum with an enormous maw which swallows sand and crushed gravel and the thick grey dust of cement and swirls it round and round within its iron guts, digesting it with a crack of copper teeth, and vomiting it again into the waiting carrier. And the appetite of the stomach is immense and does not abate during the whole course of the day and you walk with your load from the machine along the thin plank to the place of the pouring of the concrete between the wooden frames, and your back groans and the sweat pours down and mixes with the concrete so that at the end of the day your clothes are stiff like plaster casts and you have to strip them off bit by bit, one sleeve at a time and then the shirt, which comes off in the shape of your chest. No one would know you in this concrete armour. Indeed once a whole busload of tourists from my home city walked right past me without so much as a nod and among them was my own mother, so help me God and by the sweat of all the pioneers, who bore me and fed me at her breast and did not know her own grown son covered in dust and pushing a wheelbarrow of concrete for the building of his home in Israel.

Three weeks I worked on the concrete, enjoying it, for my body shed its fat and took on harder lines.

On an afternoon of the fourth week I saw him standing by the machine watching the steady line from maw to plank to mould with steadier eyes. When work was finished he came to me, smiled at my grey-streaked face and said: "Let's go for a walk." His tone was different, friendlier, stressing the equality of those who work with their hands though other qualities are different.

We walked towards the mountain between the rows of hastily assembled huts, and saplings dabbed into the ground wherever earth appeared between the rocks. The sun began its downward curve above the Carmel where Elijah burned in fire the gods of Baal with such a roaring pyre as now appeared between the valley and the sea. And as we walked he spoke to me of many things, but chiefly of the life of my people living together, and the scratch-scratch of the nerves on one another, and why it was necessary to obey now and gain their slow respect in order that later one might be able to speak so that every word would be listened to.

Many other things he told me. And by this time the sun had swept beneath the mountain line, and out of the blackened air appeared grey ghosts which baa-ed and meh-ed and hurried past with a clatter of feet like a regiment clicking its heels.

"The flock's home," he said, and pointed to a taller shape behind the line of fleece. "That's Tufa—I want you to meet him." Tufa was short, dressed in khaki with a white headdress round the neck and a water-bottle over one arm. His face was small and cunning with the keen nose of a fox, and as he passed me, ushering the last sheep before him, I noticed he smelt strongly of animals, not merely on the outside clothes but something inward. A paradise he was for dogs, who ran up to him always with both nostrils working, but his speech was gentle and his

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smile kind, and I took to him from the beginning though he could not read or write. Now this surprised me greatly when he told me, for I had never before met a Jew who could not read or write, even a Roumanian Jew as Tufa was, for their community was a cultured one. But in the end, like most things in life, although it was a misfortune for him it was a blessing for me, for it was the reason for his wanting me to work with him.

He came to me that night as I was finishing supper with a red-covered book on the outside of which was written in our secretary's flowing hand:

DEPARTMENT OF SHEEP
TUFA, MANAGER

"I would like you please to help me with my accounts," he said. "You see unfortunately as I do not know the alphabet I make my notes in a special code and every week someone writes them out for me."

He opened the book, turning over pages of neatly detailed milk records, dates of lambing, selling, and buying, until he came to a page grimier than the rest, with no ruled lines.

I looked at the page with astonishment. It was splashed haphazardly by circles, dots, crude numerals, swastikas, and other signs resembling the emblems of the Masons. One corner showed a skull and cross-bones and another an elephant standing on a Russian H.

He saw my face and hastened to explain.

"It's simple really," he offered anxiously. "This means that we began feeding them hay at the beginning of the month. And this circle that a ram was brought from Ginegar."

"And this?" I asked, pointing to the skull and cross-bones.

"Oh, that means that the big sheep with the black face and one blind eye died this week at pasture."

"And this?" I asked, pointing to the elephant.

Tufa wrinkled up his eyes, turned the picture round, examined it minutely and scratched his head in frank perplexity.

"That's actually—to tell the truth, I've forgotten."

I laughed, and he joined in almost at once.

"Do you like animals?" he asked eagerly, encouraged by my good humour.

"Very much," I said. "Do you work alone?"

"Yes," he stammered, then hurriedly tripping over himself with excitement, "but we need another person and I thought you might like to work with us."

"I would like to," I said at once, and was surprised how easily the words came. So are great decisions made, without need to, for the want is there.

"Good, good, excellent," exclaimed Tufa and slapped me on the shoulder vehemently. "I'll fix everything with the work committee! A great day for the department!" and was off, leaving behind a wistful scent of hides and wool.

The next day I began to learn the trade of a shepherd.

SONG

I took this morn with me
a book of poems
to read, for the fields are thick with grain
and the sheep do not move from one place
so that I yawn and am bored by the one view.
Beauty falls on us when the angle is set.
I have left it however by the well
where I rested to eat my honey and bread
and there some Bedouin will find it
and not knowing the meaning of scratches
on white will take it home
seeing beyond the last refinement to the first need
and light the lamps with Marlowe
caressing Hopkins with his local cigarettes
a pyre for Donne in the hearth
of the flat bread.
No matter. I shall pluck some fig leaves
and with a twig from the hedge
or a small sharp stalk
make some poems for myself,
for you too and anyone else
who cares.

The art of being a good shepherd begins the night before the morrow's work; there are things to be prepared and niceties to be attended to before rolling oneself under the blankets for a few hours untroubled sleep, until the watchman's clatter calls you to your task.

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First is the bag, which must be light, tight, and easy to carry slung over one shoulder so that it does not interfere with the flow of the upright body or the easy swing of the arms. It must have place enough for food, and a pocket for a knife to whittle figures out of fresh fine bark or to sharpen one's pencil if a keepful thought leaps through the brain, or even to have ready in a trice to cut a sick sheep's throat if her coughing and quick twitching of the legs show that the God of all the herbivores has called her to her rest.

And another pocket add for reading-stuff, a peripatetic library as the last defence against boredom if the scenery wakes no response and the sheep's antics fail to amuse. For the morning when the mind is fresh from coffee and the plunge into the cold wind any book is suitable, but best of all are the sly whimsical volumes—Lamb's letters (he would have been the first to appreciate his books being favourite reading for expeditions with sheep), Humphry Clinker, Sholem Aleichem's tales —but not great ponderous novels, no Adam Bedes or Colonel Newcomes, no creaking death or slow embraces stretched out over fourteen chapters.

And for the afternoon, when the head revolves a little and the flies come busily upon you seeking out uncovered places, best are magazines or books of paintings—you have the most marvellous art gallery in the world at your disposal: no marble shows off both Rembrandt light-in-gloom and Van Gogh incandescence like a cornfield or orange-grove in early winter.

Add only now a virgin notebook innocent of scribbling, and a pencil so that any thoughts which fly into the head like so many swallows will remain entrapped, to be examined at a later leisure to see if they have some flesh to them or are merely fluff and fine feathers.

So here you go forth equipped for life and for its prerequisite, a good day's work. In your haversack is nourishment for body and soul, and while the coffee foams and whistles on the pot you have time to check your clothes and shoes for excellence. You are going a long way from cobblers and seamstresses, and the road lies over harsh unfriendly boulders, thorn-infested miniature Saharas where a spiked leaf like the iron claw of Captain Hook will turn with one rip a tiny trickling tear into a rushing cataract of ripped cloth and bare suffered skin. If a shoe breaks at the seam on the edge of a granite rock, the next hour will see it clogged with soft river sand which deadens motion, so that the foot is reduced to a painful gradual crawling like a paralytic snail. And woe betide you if a nail should force its way through a worn sole: then your leg will be on fire at every step, and you will recall the pilgrims who walked to Jerusalem with goads and scourges and peas in their dusty shoes. So a few minutes' sleep are well lost for a good examination of the clothes.

And now you pick your way through the darkness to the sheepfold. The animals' hunger tells them the time: some stand already by the gate, peering out with bloodshot eyes. Others snort and sniffle in the chill night air, shaking the dew off their bodies like dogs fresh from the stream. A couple of quick, practised cries, and the sluggards rise from the warm manure, snatching a quick fill of water from the trough before the day's wanderings.

And now you open the gates to the flood of eager animals. Scuff-scuffing they come behind you, four hundred anxious pairs of eyes fixed on you, their master and Messiah, ready to follow you over cliff and into precipice. You turn to the left, past the great carob tree green-hoary with age, and the whole panting line swerves left with you, responsive to your slightest gesture, like the members of a great orchestra to a magnetic conductor. Past the delicate wild flowers you go, climbing trails of pale pink-belled cyclamen and glorious daubs of scarlet anemones, and the sheep come hurrying now, sniffing the deliciously fresh grass and fragrant haybales in the open field. And now it's helter-skelter to the pasture, legs lifted in the greedy rush, moving over the flat plain like so many animated lawn-mowers.

You think of a line from the Psalms: "The mountains skipped like rams," casting your eyes to the warm purple haze of the Nazareth hills. And settle down under a wide-spreading oak to read and drowse the hot hours away, while the bloodshot sun moves wearily across a copper sky towards its setting in the still warm evening light and your later plodding homeward way with a satisfied paunch-heavy flock.

Aubrey Hodes

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Peregrine Worsthorne: JOHN C. CALHOUN

"THE Union, it must be preserved." "The Union, next to our liberties, most dear." Between these two famous toasts by Andrew Jackson and John C. Calhoun at the Jefferson Day dinner in Washington in 1830, lay the seed ground of the Civil War. For the Union as it was then developing could only be preserved by the sacrifice of Southern "liberties." Alone among his Southern contemporaries, Calhoun saw the danger in its true proportions. The North, with its mounting population and with the aid of the new States in the West, was certain in time of an overwhelming and irreversible majority in Congress, and could therefore eventually get its way through the ballot box. Not only would this mean the abolition of slavery, on which the Southern economy depended, but also the imposition of an alien industrial society on the agrarian South. To Calhoun, as ardent a believer in the American experiment as Webster, Jackson, or Clay, and yet charged with the defence of his constituents' vital interests, the dilemma suggested that some crucial aspect of government had been overlooked. He saw that the struggle between North and South was so fundamental that it must end in war—or in the abject submission of one section to the hegemony of the other. But either solution was the negation of that very principle of government by consent which the United States had been formed to exemplify. How was such a dilemma possible?

On his death-bed, his cause foredoomed to failure, he wrote his *Disquisition on Government,* which sets out to reform the American political system so that minorities can live contentedly under majority rule. Because the point of departure of his argument is a defence of slavery, because the minority whose political liberties he sought to defend outraged the basic human liberty which is the lowest common denominator of all democratic traditions and indeed of Christian doctrine itself, his words have been less studied and less honoured than those of any comparable political writer. His reputation lies buried beneath the ruins of that South which he led to disaster. Yet he was one of the truly prophetic political thinkers in American history.

THE two great theories of government which the Founding Fathers attempted to institutionalise in the American experiment were first, that men make governments, and secondly, that there are certain definable limits beyond which the sovereignty of government cannot reach. Unfortunately, these two theories are not so easily reconcilable as may appear at first sight. The possibility of contradiction between the two theories did not escape the Founding Fathers. Far from it. They were obsessed with the challenge to society posed by the prospect of popular sovereignty, and an elaborate system of checks and balances were designed to control the exercise by men of their natural rights. The paradox, nevertheless, remained. As Professor Henry Steele Commager has put it: If a majority may use the government to do its will, is that not an attack upon the inalienable rights of men over and against the government? If there are limits upon what the government may do, is that not a

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challenge to, or even a contradiction of, the principle of majority rule? This antagonism between majority rule and limited government is not peculiar to the U.S.; it is a universal dilemma of all free societies. But it was in America, where majority rule and limited government were first tried out in combination, that the dilemma was most spectacularly exposed. Jefferson himself, in his famous First Inaugural, unintentionally emphasised the contradiction at the root of the American system. "All too few will bear in mind," he declared, "this sacred principle that though the will of the majority is *in all cases to* prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority have their equal rights which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression." It was all very well to state this good intention, but how, if the will of the majority was to prevail "in all cases," could the rights of minorities be safeguarded?

Calhoun, with the great Northern challenge in mind, was the first American statesman to see the full implication of the dilemma in terms, not only of practical politics, but also of political theory. The American system, evolved by the compromise between Jefferson and Hamilton, still seemed to him to lack some crucial safeguard without which it was no better than any other form of tyranny. As a political thinker he addressed himself to discovering the nature of this missing quantity.

CALHOUN went to the heart of the principal flaw in the natural rights' philosophy as it was applicable to 19th century political reality. So as to disprove the claims of monarchy to rule by divine right, it had created a fiction called "the people." By claiming that "the people" had established government in the first place, and by concluding that all power therefore rested with them, it had destroyed—as was its purpose—the case for minority government of any form. But the theory was designed to destroy minority pretensions rather than to guard against the tyranny of a majority. To establish the rights of "the people" over and against "the rulers," it had been necessary to make an arbitrary and absolute distinction between the two. As a result, political theorists had become accustomed to talk about "the people" as a single entity; and this, when "the people" themselves became the rulers, disguised the critical problem of government. For if there really was such a thing as "the people," and if "the people" controlled the government, then the whole problem of political arrangements would have been solved. But, as Calhoun went at great length to insist, the idea of "the people" was a fiction with no further relevance once it had served its purpose in destroying the case for minority governments. If the fiction were maintained, after the theories of monarchy or aristocracy had capitulated (as in America they had), it led to disastrous confusion. For the fiction of "the people" then became confounded with the fact of the numerical majority, and all the powers theoretically lavished on the people were in practice bestowed on the majority.

"All admit, that a popular government, or democracy, is government of the people; for the term implies this. A perfect government of the kind would be one which would embrace the consent of every citizen or member of the community; but as this is impracticable, those who regard the numerical as the only majority, and who can perceive no other way by which the sense of the people can be taken, they are compelled to adopt this as the only true basis of popular government, in contradistinction to government of the aristocratical and monarchial form. Being thus constrained, they are, in the next place, forced to regard the numerical majority as, in effect, the entire people; that is, the greater part as the whole; and the government of the greater part as the government of the whole. It is thus that the two come to be confounded and a part made identical with the whole. And it is thus also that all the rights, powers, and immunities of the whole people come to be attributed to the numerical majority; and, among others, the supreme sovereign authority of establishing and abolishing governments at pleasure."

This confusion between the people and the numerical majority, Calhoun argued, led to a wholly undue reliance on the right of suffrage as a safeguard of political liberty. The right of suffrage protected the majority, but since the majority was not the people this was not enough. Only if the whole community had the same interests would the right of suffrage of itself be sufficient to

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counteract the tendency of government to oppression and to abuse of its powers. "The interest of all being the same, by supposition as far as the action of the government was concerned, all would have like interests as to what laws should be made and how they should be executed." All the electors would have to do would be to choose the wisest and best agents to further their common advantages. But since there is no common interest of the people, but many divergent interests, the danger of oppression was in no way changed by placing sovereignty in "the people." Democracy, in short, by in practice simply placing power in the hands of the majority, had transferred the temptations of oppression from one body to another without in any way counteracting or diminishing them.

Having demonstrated the hollowness of the slogan "government by the people, of the people, for the people," which in practice he was convinced meant government by the majority, of the minority, for the majority, and insisting that there was no valid reason why the majority, having gained power through the ballot box, should not use it as oppressively as any other dominant interest, he concluded that the minority, for the time at any rate, would be as much the governed or subjected portion as are the people in an aristocracy or the individual subject in a monarchy. The fact that the minority could always hope to win enough votes to become the majority seemed to him an inadequate protection, as the majority, uncertain of its tenure of office, would attempt to extricate the maximum advantage in the quickest time. In any case a series of different tyrannies made up of changing majorities seemed to Calhoun little better than one consistent oppression.

SO FAR, in attacking the assumptions of the Jeffersonian Republicans, in tearing to shreds the supposed implications of the natural rights' school, in underlining the threat of majority rule, Calhoun had done no more than a whole host of eloquent American conservatives. Hamilton himself had made the same points with equal clarity. But Calhoun was as dissatisfied with the Federalist answer as he was with the Jeffersonian challenge. All the constitutional checks and balances so dear to the Federalist heart were, he argued, largely irrelevant once the realities of power were properly understood. It would be a great mistake, he insisted, to regard a written constitution as sufficient to prevent the major and dominant party from abusing its powers: "Being the party in possession of the government they will, from the same constitution of man which makes government necessary to protect society, be in favour of the powers granted by the constitution and opposed to the restrictions intended to limit them. As the major and dominant party, they will have no need of these restrictions for their protection. The ballot box of itself would be ample protection for them. Needing no other, they would come in time to regard these [Constitutional] limitations as unnecessary and improper restraints, and endeavour to elude them. . . ."

Nor would the division of government into separate and independent departments prevent this result. For, as Calhoun points out, such a division can at best only impose delay and caution on a government of the day. As each department would be under the control of the numerical majority, a mere distribution of its powers among its agents and representatives could do little or nothing to counteract its tendency to oppression and abuse of power. A glance at the Reconstruction period after the Civil War gives a poignant emphasis to this prophecy. Indeed, as so much American history was subsequently to show, a regnant majority can control all three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judiciary—however successfully they may be divided in theory.

Calhoun is also sceptical about the value of the press as a brake on oppressive majorities. "If what is called public opinion were always the opinion of the whole community, the press could, as its organ, be an effective guard against the abuse of power, just as the right of suffrage would, if the community, in reference to the action of government, had the one interest. But such is not the case. On the contrary, what is called public opinion, instead of being the united opinion of the whole community, is usually nothing more than the opinion or voice of the strongest interest, or combination of interests; and, not infrequently, of a small but energetic and active portion of the whole." At no point in

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the American system, Calhoun insisted, were the rights of the minority protected. None of the limitations so lovingly erected by the framers of the constitution were fulfilling their intended purpose.

NEITHER the Jeffersonian Republicans nor the Federalists were facing the realities. The former were guarding against the danger of minority government and had therefore overlooked the challenge of the majority. The Federalists, while theoretically concerned with the challenge of majority rule, were not really interested in guarding against it in general, but only in one particular, namely property, which the Constitution, by favouring "the wise, the rich, and the well-born," most emphatically did already. It was, therefore, not surprising that in protecting their particular interest by divided government, they assumed they had protected all minority rights.

Few elections can have been more significant in American history than that of 1840 when Van Buren, the heir to the Jackson revolution and the chosen successor to the first truly popular American president, was overwhelmingly defeated by a combination of business interests and popular votes. The great truth then dawned on the capitalist North that the interest of the property classes was, or could be made to seem to be, the majority interest. On Calhoun, however, drawing different conclusions from the same set of premises, there dawned another great truth—that the numerical majority would always be at the mercy of the most powerful economic group, which would use its power to exploit the weaker economic interests and establish its own supremacy. Both conservatives and Jeffersonians had overlooked—the former from self-interest and the latter from their unbalanced view of human nature—the crucial fact that the organisation of political parties had changed the whole nature of the political problem, rendering both the natural rights' theory and the Montesquieu theory of divided powers equally unfitted, on their own, to preserve political justice.

Not only was the old distinction between the ruler and the subject hopelessly misleading, but so also was the distinction between class and class. The Federalists had successfully designed the constitution on the assumption that majority rule, which they mistakenly thought could only take the form of mob rule, had been finally doomed by giving the moneyed class a preponderant voice in the mechanics of parliamentary government. But in constitutional governments of the popular form, Calhoun pointed out, interests are no longer divided between classes. "In an aristocracy all interests are politically reduced to two—the nobles and the people; and in a monarchy, with a nobility, into three—monarchy, the nobles, and the people. In each case they are so few, that the sense of each may be taken separately, through its appropriate organ, so as to give each a concurrent voice and a negation on the other." The Federalists, imagining that democratic society would be in this image, but with one extra dimension, felt that so long as each class was represented in the government—the masses in the Lower House, the propertied classes in the Senate, and the wise and good in the Supreme Court—the balance could be maintained in their favour. But in popular government, Calhoun maintained, these distinctions were largely irrelevant. The interests were too diverse to correspond to any such simplified pattern. Because of the absence of these distinctions, the various national interests—resulting from diversity of pursuits, conditions, situations, and character of different portions of the people—rise into prominence, and struggle to maintain the ascendancy. In this struggle, parties are formed, transcending classes and comprising complementary interests. One party will comprise the majority of interests and the other the minority.

As Parrington astutely observed, Calhoun saw that popular government, from which the Republicans had hoped so much, changed only the outward form of the selfish struggle for power by substituting party rule for class rule. Drawing their support from the majority interests, strengthened by powers of patronage, armed with the weapon of differential taxation, directed by a small caucus of political brokers, parties could oppress the remainder with impunity. And the more popular the party was, the more absolute was its authority. The more truly it represented the greatest good of the greatest number, the more completely it was free to oppress the minorities outside its political circle of interests.

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Calhoun did not limit his concern about the dangers of majority rule only to his own particular Southern interest. He saw that majority rule, as it was then developing in America, threatened every minority interest in turn. The owners of capital had behind them a popular majority which, from very different motives, included elements of all classes. After destroying the South, they would oppress the wage earners, for the latter would also be a minority and, like the South, incapable of protecting itself. No branch of government would come to its succour, as no branch of government, in the last resort, came to the aid of the South. "After we are exhausted, the contest will be between the capitalists and the operatives; for into these two classes it must, ultimately, divide society. The issue of the struggle here must be the same as it has been in Europe. Under the operation of the system, wages must sink more rapidly than the prices of the necessities of life, till the proportion of the products of their labour left to them will be barely sufficient to preserve existence. For the present, the pressure is on our section." The abuses which majority rule, coupled with party organisation, could lead to were brilliantly and prophetically discerned by Calhoun fifty years before Ostrogorski, just as his insistence on the economic basis of political power preceded Marx by two decades.

CALHOUN did not flinch from the implications of his criticism of majority rule. If the weak were not protected, he argued, the whole object of government had been destroyed. Government was designed to protect minorities. The majority could always look after itself. In the last few months of his life, therefore, he attempted to outline a system of popular government which would avoid the dangers of majority rule, thereby preserving both the Union and Southern liberties.

Calhoun based his system firmly on the right of suffrage, which he regarded as the indestructible and primary principle in the foundation of a constitutional government. But since this principle does not prevent one interest, or combination of interests, from using the power of government to aggrandise itself at the expense of others, some additional safeguard must be devised. "Two powers are necessary to the preservation of free states; a power on the part of the ruled to prevent rulers from abusing their authority, by compelling them to be faithful to their constituents, and which is effected through the right of suffrage; and a power to compel the parts of society to be just to one another, by compelling them to consult the interest of each other—which can only be effected . . . by requiring the concurring assent of all the great and distinct interests of the community to the measures of the government." To achieve this requirement Calhoun propounded his doctrine of a "concurrent majority," which must rank as one of the few original American contributions to political theory.

A true majority, in the Calhoun concept, was not simply the view of most individuals in any given society, which could, of course, be discovered by the suffrage, by a mere counting of heads, as Disraeli put it. It was a balancing or weighing of interests between all the sections of the community, with each major element permitted a right of veto. ". . . . There are two different moods in which the sense of the community may be taken; one, simply by the right of suffrage, unaided; the other . . . through a proper organism. Each collects the sense of the majority. But one regards numbers only, and considers the whole community as a unit, having but one common interest throughout; and collects the sense of the greater number of the whole, as that of the community. The other, on the contrary, regards interests as well as numbers; considering the community as made up of different and conflicting interests, as far as the action of the government is concerned; and takes the sense of each, through its majority or appropriate organ, and the united sense of all, as the sense of the entire community. The former of these I shall call the numerical, or absolute majority; and the latter the concurrent, or constitutional majority."

The necessary consequence of taking the sense of the community by the "concurrent majority" was, Calhoun explained, to give to each interest or portion of the community a power of negation of the others. It was this mutual negation among the various conflicting interests which invested each with the power of protecting itself; and placed the rights and safety of each minority, where

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only it could be securely placed, under its own guardianship. To Calhoun, it was this essential negative power—veto, nullification, check or balance of power—which, in fact, was the only genuine basis of constitutional government.

CALHOUN was sufficiently realistic to realise that no "organism," as he called it, could in practice represent all the interests of any community, and that only the sense of a few great and prominent interests could be ascertained. But this would be far preferable to the absolute numerical majority, "as it would require so large a part of the community to concur or acquiesce in the action of government, that the number to be plundered would be too few, and the number to be aggrandised too many, to afford adequate motives for oppression and abuse of its powers." Nor did the practical problem of working the concurrent majority seem insuperable to Calhoun. In theory, of course, the right of any section to veto the decisions of a majority of the other would lead to anarchy—or minority tyranny. But for this very reason, because the results would be so damaging, the right would clearly be used with caution and moderation.

Equally, because oppressive attempts by the majority might lead to the use of the veto, no section would try to impose its will beyond the bounds of good sense. "The effect of the concurrent majority is to cause the different interests . . . to desist from attempting to adopt any measure calculated to promote the prosperity of one, or more, by sacrificing that of the others; and thus to force them to unite in such measures only as would promote the prosperity of all, as the only means to prevent the suspension of the action of the government, and thereby to avoid anarchy, the greatest of all evils." It is by means of such authorised and effectual resistance that oppression is prevented, and the necessity of resorting to force is superseded; and hence compromise, instead of force, becomes the conservative principle of concurrent majorities.

Calhoun dismissed the argument that concurrent majority would be so dilatory a system of government, would so confuse the national purpose, that no State adopting it could last long in a world of competing national units. When something must be done—and when it can be done only by the united consent of all—the necessity of the case, he argued, would force to a compromise. Calhoun illustrated this contention by reference to trial by jury, the rule of which, he maintained, imposed on the twelve members a "disposition to harmonise." This is the crux of the Calhoun theory. The difference between the theory of the concurrent and the numerical majority goes to the root of social organisation. In the former, individual or selfish feelings are from their nature necessarily enlisted on the side of the social and made to unite with them in promoting the interests of the whole, as the best way of promoting the separate interests of each; while in those of the numerical majority, the social are necessarily enlisted on the side of the individual, and made to contribute to the interest of the parties, regardless of that of the whole.

It followed, therefore, that the foundation of society based on the concurrent majority was firmer than that based on the merely numerical majority. All society ultimately rests on necessity. Force, which upholds the numerical majority, is only acquiesced in from necessity—a necessity, however, not a whit more demanding than that which compels the different interests and sections in government of the concurrent majority to acquiesce in compromise. But the difference in these two motives is sufficient to change the nature of society, replacing submission by patriotism.

Calhoun was content to establish a principle rather than draw up a blueprint. His efforts to suggest the machinery for giving effect to the concurrent majority are too vague to be worth serious study. He seems to have visualised Congress as a body representing industries and economic interests, elected by their different groups whose decisions would need to be reached unanimously. It is a conception bearing many resemblances to the theory of the corporate state. As a panacea for political justice it was clearly inadequate. The protection of economic interests are not of themselves sufficient to establish the good —or even the free—society. But what Calhoun demonstrated before Marx is that government by the majority, unless checked, means government by the most powerful economic interests. In one period this might

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mean government by organised capital. In another, it might mean government by organised labour. But always it meant that the dominant group would legislate (or interpret the constitution) to its own advantage, and that those laws (and those interpretations) would be oppressive to other groups.

As a statesman Calhoun failed in his dearest aims; the South was defeated and subjugated. As a political thinker his ideas have never been formally adopted in the American system; the numerical rather than the concurrent majority still, in theory, governs the U.S. Nevertheless, Calhoun's contribution to the workings of American politics has been profound. His *Disquisition on Government*, now only belatedly receiving its due in the U.S., is an indispensable work for a proper understanding of what is unique in the American political system. Without implementing Calhoun's theory of the "concurrent majority" in any specific fashion, Congress has certainly incorporated much of it into its practice. If Calhoun's cherished principle of a negative constitution is not written into the statute book, it is in evidence every day in the corridors of Congress where political bargains are struck and alliances cemented.

For the essence of American political practice, in contrast to the central principle of majority rule, is that each minority interest or bloc capable of mustering a significant number of votes enjoys an effective veto on any relevant legislation or governmental action. Over, and in many ways above, the constitution there exist the unwritten rules of American politics, no less mandatory because intangible.

As anyone concerned with any particular piece of legislation quickly learns, Congress today most emphatically does not accept the simple dictate of majority rule. A political party with a large majority in Congress may have adopted a particular measure on its platform at the last election, but if a bloc of Congressmen—and there are as many blocs as there are interests—with any interest likely to be affected imposes a veto, the legislation will be quickly dropped. It is an unwritten rule of Congress that, except in a national emergency, no bloc shall ever be outvoted on any issue which damages its vital interests. The ultimate expression of this right of veto, of course, is the peculiarly American practice of the filibuster. This practice is now frowned upon by liberals, as it has been used in recent years largely by Southern senators to protect white supremacy. There was a time, however, when liberals were glad to fall back on the filibuster to defend many a progressive cause.

Another feature of the Washington scene, the lobbyist, also operates under a cloud. It is, however, incontrovertible that the lobbies, of which the most politically powerful are by no means always the most wealthy, do fulfil an essential function for which political parties are ill-suited. They are the channels bringing to Capitol Hill each rivulet of minority opinion which, if left to the great tides of political sentiment, would get dissolved and deflected. The right of veto, whether exercised by bloc or lobby, in practice—as Calhoun predicted—is used with caution. Because one interest in fact depends on the help of others—or at least on the toleration of others—for legislation advantageous to itself, it cannot afford to oppose legislation favourable to other interests, unless absolutely necessary. Each interest is prepared to trade its support for returns in kind. A premium is therefore placed on compromise, on political bargaining, on horse-trading, as a result of which the public interest is often sacrificed to the private advantage. But it is difficult to see how any other system, based on consent, could work in the particular circumstances of the American Union.

The Calhoun doctrine is not only obvious in the workings of Congress. The administration itself is also divided between the representatives of various interests, with the Cabinet officers actually charged by law with the protection of their special departmental concerns. The President is also constrained by custom to award a Cabinet post, if possible, to a Catholic, a Jew, a trade unionist, and so on. "In other countries," Mr. John Fischer has written, "each agency of government is at least presumed to act for the nation as a whole; here most agencies are expected to behave as servants to one interest or another"—which, incidentally, helps to explain the difficulty of ever establishing what American administration policy actually

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is. The whole practice of "eligibility," which governs the selection of candidates for public office from the President downwards, is also essentially a reflection of the "concurrent majority" theory. A candidate must be acceptable to all important interests or groups, any one of which can and does impose a veto if it feels its position threatened.

The same principle—what Calhoun called the "disposition to harmonise"—is, of course, strongly at work in American parties. Because of the formidable centrifugal forces in American society, the idea of political parties as bodies of men bound together under an ideological banner clearly holds immense dangers. The only time any American party was formed on these lines the result was civil war. Instead, therefore, of dividing the United States along ideological lines, the American parties have limited themselves to one simple objective: to unite a sufficient proportion of the various interests to enable them to win office. To do this, however, the parties have had to cast their net so wide that it can include a mass of minor interests. No group, however small, is too insignificant not to merit the attention of the party leaders. More important, of course, neither party can afford to ignore *any* major interest. The Republicans cannot overlook the claims of labour and the Democrats cannot ignore the claims of business. As a result, American parties have no special aims, no special policies, no special doctrines. They shift their course with every change in the winds of opinion and set their sails to catch every whisper of a prevailing mood.

Such a system has many faults. Based essentially on a negative principle, strong, consistent government is difficult to achieve. In times of crisis, the national purpose evolves with dangerous delays. Vested interests can at times frustrate the national advantage. All these difficulties Calhoun recognised—and dismissed. They are, he insisted, the inevitable price of popular government in a country so large and complex as the United States. A system of government formed on the simple majority rule is, he admitted, far simpler and more efficient. "It is simple, indeed, wielded, as it is, by a single power—the will of the greater number . . . but whatever advantages simplicity and facility of construction may give it, the other forms of absolute government have them in a still higher degree."

Whether it be a source of consolation or of shame, Calhoun would find today much in the American political system bearing the indelible stamp of his ideas. Far more than Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, or any of the Founding Fathers, it is Calhoun who has cast his shadow into the future—at least of American politics. He did not, like them, make America; but his teachings have contributed vastly to making the system work.

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Communications

The British Intellectuals

SIR—Edward Shils, in your April number, does well to draw attention to the dangers and limitations inherent in a national intelligentsia which narrows its range of sympathy and curiosity within its own society. Nor does he understate the case considering the narrowness of range expressed in English literature since the turn of the century. Even during the twenties and thirties, when our British intellectuals were genuflecting before the great Red Dawn and British writers were applying their energies to the abstract expression of Marxist theses, the novels of working-class life were certainly rare —Lawrence and Orwell were lone voices practically.

One has only to consider the number of Conservative M.P.s and persons holding H.M. Service officer rank who are associated with publishing houses to realise the prejudice which a novel portraying life outside the ken of the aristocratic-gentry class must overcome before it can hope to be published. British war novels are viewed almost exclusively through the eyes of the commissioned ranks. Where are the novels depicting the war of the rank and file? Where are the British equivalents of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (German), *The Naked and the Dead, From Here to Eternity* (American), *The Blue Mariner* (French)? . . . Strangled at birth? Similarly with the working-class novel; where are our counterparts of *The Old Man and the Sea, The Grapes of Wrath, Christ Stopped at Eboli, Journey to the End of the Night*? One has only to recall the snobbish disdain with which the recognised literary critics received some of these works to realise why it is that the two Americans most eulogised in higher literary circles happen to be Henry James—a man who turned his back on the greatest happenings in American history to write tea-table chatter—and T. S. Eliot. Small wonder that W. H. Davies wrote of our poetry critics: "All that can be said for them is that they are correct in form, and, morally, quite respectable. Judging by my own experience, as a poet of the people, our ploughman (Burns) would not have received much encouragement from these scholars, were he a living poet. They have been shocked by the same strong gusto which they are now forced to admire."

May I stress the point made by Edward Shils: that among the tasks of the intellectuals is the truthful interpretation of their national society and its culture. Only by recognising and embracing the aspirations of the Judes and the Leonard Basts can our contemporary literature be fired afresh with the passion, virility, freshness, and spontaneity which it so notably lacks.

Without this resuscitation the English language must look to America to uphold the lineage of Bunyan, of Burns, of Cobbett, and of a man who had to fight this prejudice all his life—D. H. Lawrence.

TOM MONEY

London, S.W.15

SIR—Although Manchester's director of education berated our intellectuals for having a weakness for Marxism, most of us will agree with Professor Shils that there is a definite intellectual drift toward the humane, unspecialised, and unmotivated culture of "aristocratic-gentry."

Near the end of *The Mint*, a contented T. E. Lawrence writes "everywhere a relationship." This common denominator is obtained, in times of peace, in our politically-divided and class-conscious nation through an idolatry of institutions and customs. . . . At one time our cherished institutions appeared (to our impatient intellectual) to constitute a bar to progress but now they emerge as a brake against a precipitous dash to the precipice. There is a feeling that the time is coming for Great Britain to draw on that spiritual reserve, fortified as the professor infers by loss of foreign and imperial assets, in order to give a fearful and unstable world some moral leadership; so we must show to the "outsiders" some semblance of unity. . . . As our institutions are now threatened by complete annihilation, our intellectual yearns once again to assume the mantle of St. George.

May I conclude by observing that Professor Shils appears to underestimate the provincial influence on British culture. That old adage

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"What Manchester thinks today, England thinks tomorrow" is still in some respects applicable now. We have our theatrical "try-outs" prior to West End production. The *Manchester Guardian* is authoritatively quoted in both Houses and frequently critically misquoted by *Pravda*. . . .

DOUGLAS E. P. BRADBURY

Manchester 10

SIR—Charged with the responsibility of writing an essay on British intellectuals, Professor Shils has prepared a trivial little union picket sign which reads "Some British intellectuals are unfair to some other British intellectuals." Of course, he can in no way be criticised for suggesting that these special persons should behave like a band of jolly good fellows in a non-existent, classless society. The serious criticism lies in the fact that as a treatise on British intellectuals, it would have sounded quite familiar to ears worn by subjects of Elizabeth I.

It is unfortunate that Shils did not define his idea of an intellectual. He did say that part of their "task" (not responsibility) "is the truthful interpretation of their own national society and its culture to their own countrymen and to the world." In the world of today, this concept can only be considered as national tribalism. This is no time to yearn for Greek City States, or wave a Rousseauistic national flag over the graves of those intellectuals who long ago won the great good battles which he seems to think are still being fought in England. . . .

To me, an intellectual is the Keeper of the Keys, who can unlock doors leading both himself and the populace to either Heaven or Hell, depending upon his sense of moral and ethical responsibility. If this definition has any validity, then British intellectuals today follow a logical course. The Hydrogen bomb legally destroyed nationalism. Britain today leads the first experiment in man's hesitant steps toward world federation. She points toward control of man's inhumanity to man and she continues to try to explain to the Shils and others that the next war would be the last war. These are the issues and to me they are what most British intellectuals now seem to work for. Should they weaken in this responsibility, there may be no one here to see the stripes on their neckties.

WILLIAM H. WISE

Paris

The Trail of the Dinosaur

SIR—It seems a pity that Mr. Arthur Koestler, writing in the May edition of ENCOUNTER, did not apply the same ruthless logic to his appreciation of Christianity as he used in his demolition of the current false notions about co-existence.

Mr. Koestler's rejection of Christianity on the grounds that it demands the suspension of his reasoning faculties would not surprise any Christian apologist, but he would cause surprise by the examples which he cites of what he is unprepared to accept on these terms. To support his argument he strangely picks out the doctrine of the bodily ascent of the Virgin. Yet to reject Christianity on the basis of a doctrine which is not received by all the Churches and is held as essential by very few is analogous to dismissing all the proofs of modern physical science on the basis of a doubt about the validity of Einstein's work on the Quantum theory. The second example which Mr. Koestler gives would suggest that Messrs. Eliot and Greene claim the literary merits of their stage plays as a criterion for the admissibility of their faith. . . .

It is because he himself is divided in purpose that Mr. Koestler complains that Christianity thrives on a split mind. He demands renewed contact with the supernatural but his terms are that this contact should be at a natural level. Mr. Koestler, I think, will never find it possible to talk himself into the Christian faith on the basis of the type of rational argument with which he now thinks he is able to overthrow it. . . .

MICHAEL K. NEWTON

Peterhouse College,
Cambridge

Hume's Politics

SIR—In answer to Mr. Day's objection (in the May number of ENCOUNTER) to my account of Hume's politics: I agree entirely with his statement of Hume's political principles. To secure security and prevent violence was certainly, in Hume's view, the aim of political organisation, and his historical judgements follow rigorously from this principle. To carry these judgements a step further back, to their ground in Hume's own nature, is by no means to depreciate or to overlook their intellectual merit. It is the deeply rooted consistency of Hume's principles in all areas—theory of knowledge, ethics, politics, æsthetics, religion—which makes him so very far and away the foremost of British philosophers. And in general it is precisely the greatest thinkers—Plato, Spinoza, Kant—in whom such rootedness is to be found. I am sorry if the condensation of my argument (and the admittedly unfortunate phrase "politely applauding") led to a misunderstanding.

MARJORIE GRENE

Co. Wicklow, Ireland

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BOOKS

The Naïve Emancipator

IT IS difficult for me to see the work of Aldous Huxley in perspective. He was the first "modern" author that I ever read. On my fifteenth birthday in 1929 I was given *Antic Hay* and *The Forsyte Saga*. Galsworthy's work, I remember, seemed to me "very true." My own family had been much more *louche*, more "exciting." However, if only Monty Dartie seemed a relation, the Forsyte values were immediately familiar, they were what my family paid lip service to, they were what I was in revolt against. But *Antic Hay*! *Antic Hay* was all that I devoutly hoped for. I quickly got hold of the newly published *Point Counter Point*, and then devoured *Crome Yellow*, *Those Barren Leaves*, and the short stories. Aldous Huxley was the god of my adolescence. True enough, *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* soon came on the scene to make me laugh more, to seem "smarter," but Aldous Huxley was still the centre of my intellectual pretensions, all the more powerful because he was so far beyond the world of the intelligentsia to which I aspired that he could turn upon it the same satirical eye that I employed towards my middle-class surroundings. By the time that I went to Oxford my admiration was over. Strong winds from the left had strengthened my original antipathy to his anti-democratic views, some sexual experience and much more "frank sexual discussion" had removed the glamour from his "outspokenness," I had found enough "culture" for myself no longer to be dazzled by the much wilder proliferation of "culture names" which had once so excited my ardent ignorance. I read, of course, his succeeding works, but they had little relation to my enthusiasm of the thirties. I still called him a "clever" writer, but the adjective was now intended to have a slightly amused, pejorative sound. When, however, twenty years after my first reading of *Antic Hay*, I came to publish my own first fiction, I now see that it was filled with echoes of my first love.

I still think Aldous Huxley is perfect reading for the adolescent—he is, of course, somewhat more, as I shall suggest—and, if I were giving a book to an intellectually aspiring boy of fifteen, I should hope that *Antic Hay* would still prove a success. Nevertheless, I am not quite convinced that this would be so: for Mr. Huxley's attacks on democracy, Freudianism, scientific materialism, sexual hedonism, and so on, so out of fashion in the thirties, have long been modish again and the youngest intelligentsia are, I believe, moving on again. In any case, the neo-aristocracy and the neo-theocracy of the forties and fifties—the world of such diverse gods as Mr. Eliot, Dr. Leavis, Professor Butterfield, and the Olympus of the New Criticism—has been altogether a more stringent, intellectually more exacting affair than Mr. Huxley's. True enough, he has given us in his latest works his own peculiar brand of earnestness, discipline, and religious vision, but I doubt if it carries us much further than the last pages of *Those Barren Leaves*. "There is a whole universe," says Calamy, "within me, unknown and waiting to be explored; a whole universe that can only be approached by way of introspection and patient uninterrupted thought. . . . What one may find there is so important that it's almost a matter of life and death to undertake the search." In any case, whatever the sufficiency

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of the content, the manner of exposition, the cultural framework of Mr. Huxley's work will hardly satisfy the newest generation. However encyclopædic his actual knowledge, its statement on paper—particularly in the spheres of science and the fine arts—has always worn a most superficial air. Those references to Cimabue and Zurbaran, to Poincaré and Hilbert were strong drink to a History Sixth of 1930; they will, I fear, be very flat to the same form today. Education, as they say, has advanced so much.

Nevertheless, it seems worth recording that a novelist of a much younger generation than my own—Mr. John Wain—admitted in a discussion at the Institute of Contemporary Arts to the youthful influence of Mr. Huxley's early work. If the ironic treatment of intellectual and sexual pretensions in my own work owes much to Huxley, so, I think, does the savage, custard-pie treatment of the same human foibles in Mr. Wain's *Hurry on Down* or Mr. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*. Later generations have not done justice to Mr. Huxley. He was the brilliant young form master, that sophisticated, witty young uncle who emancipated us from the suet pudding hopelessness of our youth, who could do so because in great degree his own emotions, his own phobias were ours, the adolescents'; and, if afterwards we "outgrew" him and felt a bit ashamed, it is time we acknowledged our debt to him.

THERE is so much of the old Aldous Huxley in *The Genius and the Goddess*,* not least when he is most strongly asserting his new faith, that an examination of this latest novel, or rather, long short story, will tell us much of why he was once so powerful an influence, much of why he is so no more, and a little of what, when all the criticism is made, is so excellent in his work.

Mr. Huxley tells his new story in the form of an after-dinner reminiscence, the ironic-nostalgic backward glance of a scientist upon the lives of a famous physicist and his wife—the genius and the goddess of the title. The reminiscence is brought forth by the publication of an official biography of the great man and is a debunking commentary. Huxley used exactly the same form in his brilliant short story "Chawdron," but there it served as a double irony, revealing the worthlessness of the debunker as of those he debunked; in *The Genius and the Goddess* it serves no such purpose and tends on the whole to deaden the novel with its old-fashioned, "Another brandy, my dear fellow?", Pall Mall Magazine atmosphere. We look back from the guilt-ridden, Armageddon factory-physics of today to the carefree, high-adventure physics of 1921. On the whole, Mr. Huxley is not at his best in recapturing the atmosphere of the past. One of his incidental touches here—a hobble skirt—is hardly a feature of life in 1921. However, the historical atmosphere of the story is not very important except in one respect—it allows the author once again to ridicule and savage the illusions, particularly the amorous illusions, of his youth.

Mr. Huxley has, on occasion, attempted this sport with later generations of youth, with Sebastian, for example, in *Time Must Have a Stop*—the absurdities of calf love and its poetry. He is happier, however, in *The Genius and the Goddess*, for here he is back in the age of Gumbril and the hero of *Crome Yellow*, back, in fact, in his own time of innocence. The violence with which he ridicules youth's awakening is, of course, part of his appeal to youth. His own view of sexual passion and love is youth's—romantic, afraid, finding its joy in self-wounding. Even his view of physical beauty is a limited romantic stereotype. Rivers, the narrator of *The Genius and the Goddess*, repeats it for us: " 'You start as a lump of protoplasm, a machine for eating and excreting. You grow into this sort of thing. Something almost supernaturally pure and beautiful.' He laid his cheek once more against the child's head. 'Then comes a bad time with pimples and puberty. After which you have a year or two, in your 'twenties, of being Praxiteles. But Praxiteles soon puts on weight and starts to lose his hair and for the next forty years you degenerate into one or other of the varieties of the human gorilla.' " The obsessive torment with which Huxley associates kisses and bad breath, embraces and body odour, has been called Manichæan, compared with Swift's disgusts; it is, I think, something rather less. Of course, he has himself satirised the sado-masochism of the disillusioned romantic in Colman, Spandrell, and Chelifer, but I doubt if he has fully gauged the depth of his romantic

**The Genius and the Goddess*. By ALDOUS HUXLEY. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.

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naïveté. Disillusion with the world is not difficult if one has taken Shirley Temple, Little Lord Fauntleroy, and Black Beauty for the real thing, mistaken the fondant icing for the cake. In this sense, Mr. Huxley's path to God has been happily predestined, Grace has come easily with easy disillusion. For potential converts, however, to whom humanity's history is a little less like the tumble of toy bricks, this naïveté is liable to weaken the force of his arguments.

THIS aspect of Mr. Huxley's work is important in relation to his new novel, for *The Genius and the Goddess* is ultimately a religious tract upon the vanity of human life, the necessity of being prepared for death, of "dying every moment" in this life in which we are always and completely alone. If the reader feels, as I do, that Mr. Huxley has never valued this life in adult terms, then his estimate of its vanity must be lessened accordingly. There is indeed something very naïve not only in his estimate of life but also in his estimate of his opponents' naïveté about God and Death. "Maybe it's just a question of being in love with God. But that is neither here nor there. Or rather it's the only thing that's either here, there or anywhere; but if we said so, we'd be cut by all our respectable friends." Mr. Huxley's respectable friends must surely be curiously shockable pagans.

On the whole, however, it must be said that Mr. Huxley tries to take on his opponents at a high level. The chief target of the novel is Katy, the wife of the great physicist, the Goddess. She is described as "Hera playing the part of a milkmaid—but a milkmaid with a mind, a milkmaid who had gone to college." College-trained or not, Katy strongly recalls Mary Rampion of *Point Counter Point*—she is a Lawrencian woman. Lawrence, after all, as is clear from *Point Counter Point* and Huxley's Introduction to his Letters, commanded Huxley's respect more highly than any other of the intellectual figures of his youth. Lawrence's genius almost woke him from the adolescent dream which has gradually turned into a Yogi trance. In attacking Katy, then, Huxley is aiming at paganism at its highest. She is, we are told, "beyond good and evil on the merely Olympian level (and the Olympians, of course, were nothing but a pack of superhuman animals with miraculous powers)." But animal grace, though it may work miracles it does not comprehend, is not enough. Predestination catches up with it. Katy, in short, is only human; and, as a result, she dies a death peculiarly suitable to remind us that we are "dying every moment" and to give her lover, whose comic virginity she had taken away, every opportunity to see how close love lies to the charnel house. She is killed in a car smash—"with every refinement of physical outrage—an eye put out by a splinter of glass, the nose and lips and chin almost obliterated, rubbed out on the bloody macadam of the road."

If the baroque violence of this lesson in human vanity seems a little too familiar, it should not allow us to play into Mr. Huxley's hands by refusing to consider his thesis further. Two questions are pertinent. Does he in Katy present us with humanity at its pagan highest? And, if this humanity without God fails, does he give us any real conviction of a transcendence that provides an alternative?

AS FAR as I am concerned, the answer to the second question is certainly no. The saint, the vessel of grace of the book, is an old Negro servant-woman Beulah, who is of the same family as the Quakeress in Mr. Isherwood's last novel. I just do not find their sanctity convincing; and the fact that Beulah in her simple wisdom foreshadows psychosomatic medicine by a few decades impresses me not at all (Mr. Huxley supposes that most of his readers are far more tied to *materia medica* than is justified). The death and decay which have always made nonsense of human achievement for Mr. Huxley are still there in full, but the transcendent faith which has provided a meaning is not successfully conveyed.

When, however, we examine the character of Katy to see whether in fact Mr. Huxley has chosen paganism at its highest for his opponent, we learn, I think, something even more interesting. Katy's death happens because, while driving the car, she is quarrelling with her sixteen-year-old daughter. This girl Ruth has been rejected by the man who is her mother's lover. She guesses at the liaison and threatens all that Katy has built up in her life with the great physicist. With sensible treatment, however, Ruth's jealousy might not have been aroused, but Katy, the

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wise Hera, is far from a wise mother. When she finds that Ruth is using make-up, she makes a hell of a superior scene—"she had the make-up kit thrown into the garbage can and herself, with an expression of nauseated disgust, poured the perfume into the toilet and pulled the plug." Not even a sensible up-to-date mother of 1922, let alone Hera. Mr. Huxley puts it all down to hubris and Predestination; to the non-transcendental eye, the root of the trouble was that Katy was no goddess but a well-meaning, high thinking, academic woman who substituted hygiene and "natural, pagan living" for honesty and kindness. Exactly in fact, the sort of person Mr. Huxley would once have satirised with his superb irony, loving but savage. But, for the sake of the tract, he must make her a pagan goddess.

The Genius and the Goddess, in fact, sadly retains all the sadomasochistic romanticism, the preoccupation with death and decay, the now stale attacks on science and humanism, but we look in vain for additions to that long gallery of wonderfully ironic portraits—Mr. Cardan, Mrs. Aldwinkle, Miss Thriplow, Mr. Mercaptan, Lippiatt, Birlap, and so on. We look in vain, too, for those strange, fantastic interludes in which Mr. Huxley allowed his fancy to play—the dwarfs in *Crome Yellow*, the would-be murderer and his moron sister in *Those Barren Leaves*. It was in these two novels that he found so satisfactory a form for his talent—the perfection of the Peacock-South Wind tradition.

An intellectually aspiring youth of fifteen may, I fear, be pardoned if he rejects *The Genius and the Goddess*; he will be foolish if he does not seek acquaintance with the enchantment of Mr. Huxley's first three novels.

Angus Wilson

IMPERATOR ROMANUS

THERE is no denying the magic that the idea and the very name of Rome has for the Western imagination. We may try our hardest to be commonsensical about the historical place occupied by the Empire, but the old throb brought on by that "most high and palmy state" will persist. Past fashions often perplex us, but not the one whereby a king or other eminent person used to be depicted as an imperator on his monument, nor does the continuing use of Latin for the greatest occasions, nor the cult of Græco-Roman styles in architecture which was followed from the 15th century to within living memory. Assertions that the Empire was, in fact, a barbarous polity, promoted by barbarous morals and disfigured by barbarous manners, strike us as bold and somewhat irreverent, no matter on how much sound scholarship they are based. I am sure that I am not the only person alive to have felt a new respect for the fashion of saying "town" for "London" on learning that it originated as an imitation of Roman custom.

The Balkan and modern Greek world, the Byzantine area, which never experienced a total eclipse of civilisation, does not share in this Western enthusiasm for the supposedly great Roman Mother. Nor have I heard of a parallel cult elsewhere in the world. Everyone, of course, has a cult of the distant past, but as with the long-enduring Persian cult of the pre-Islamic kingdom, such devotion to vanished times and states is quite frankly embellished by myth. It is only in the West that, by the subtlest interchange of thought and feeling, the myth becomes so inextricably confounded with ascertainable fact that even the precisest learning can hardly unravel the mess, as we gaze back fascinated across a dark chasm to the golden brightness which surrounds our antiquities.

For those who, like myself, enjoy a plunge into the dear old Roman bath, Madame Yourcenar is just the person. Her construction of Hadrian's autobiography* could hardly be more successfully evocative, and to read her deeply studied description of life in the supreme age of Roman power is to live in it again. Not only does she re-create the

**Memoirs of Hadrian.* By MARGUERITE YOURCENAR. Secker and Warburg. 12s. 6d.

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varied world on which Roman Imperialists laid their heavy and tolerant rule, but she gives us a convincing picture of the state of mind which went with their triumph and the long Greek after-glow. The Emperor gives us a full account of why he built the Pantheon, and we catch the mood of generous, shallow, facile monotheism which was at the back of Roman religious variety and inadequacy. He relates the deeds of his life with the sincere self-congratulation to which most politicians, ancient and modern, are prone when they remember their public careers, but which seemed unquestionably virtuous in a pre-Christian world. If we are irritated by Hadrian's self-admiration, his innocence in this is so skilfully conveyed by Mme. Yourcenar that we do not lose respect. Yet in spite of this we can only occasionally give the sympathy we are asked for.

What goes wrong with the book is the same as went wrong, so far as is known, with Hadrian himself. He was probably the most successful, beneficent, and statesmanlike of all the Emperors, yet he does not cut a great figure in the imagination of men as does Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Trajan, or Marcus. For all his impressive qualities there was something absurd about him, and something that not only makes us suspicious of this paragon, but made his contemporaries suspicious too. Instinctively we give him no benefits of any doubts. The murders committed by most Roman Emperors do not shock us because we expect such things in that uproarious company, but when we hear of the grave æsthete Hadrian banishing and contriving the death of Apollodoros because he criticised Hadrian's taste in architecture, we are revolted; and though Madame Yourcenar tries to make the episode palatable by stressing Apollodoros's doubtful political interests, the crime remains extraordinarily disgusting. And then there is the great "difficulty" about Antinous.

We all know, of course, that homosexual love, smiled upon by the noblest of Greek thinkers, needs to be judged leniently when we are considering the ancient world, but the very fact that there was this tolerance makes Hadrian's hysterical exhibitionism the more exasperatingly, the more embarrassingly, foolish. Mme. Yourcenar throws herself with zest into Hadrian's emotion, and there are moments when she contrives to move us

CZESLAW MILOSZ

author of THE CAPTIVE MIND

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and make us feel with this great and unhappy ruler the anguish of his loss, but for the most part we simply cannot be sympathetic. The Antinous business simply will not "get across." In vain we hear Hadrian's dignified apologies, in vain our attention is diverted to the wisdom which needed unusual relaxations, and which, we are asked to believe, was so enormous that it could foresee not only the far-ahead dangers of a Welfare State too exclusively devoted to programmes of full employment, but also the establishment of a Christian pontificate in Rome, and even its likely association with Mons Vaticanus. We suspend disbelief for the sake of enjoying the admirably contrived immersion, but at the end of it we cannot for the life of us believe in the deified being whom we are called on to honour. Gibbon said that Hadrian "was, by turns, an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, and a jealous tyrant," and we find no reason to join in a more flattering opinion.

THE *New York Times Book Review* is quoted on the jacket as saying that Mme. Yourcenar's book "invites comparison" with Walter Pater's famous study of *Marius the Epicurean*. The invitation seems to have been misdirected, for a comparison which comes more readily to mind is with Mr. Graves's remarkable "autobiographies" of the Emperor Claudius. The latter, in Mr. Graves's hands, proved a more manageable and therefore more rewarding subject. Mr. Graves makes us enter into Claudius's thoughts, but since he cannot ask us (or himself) to adore his hero, the author is enabled, while identifying himself with his subject, to place his reader in a position to observe the fearful comedy of ancient Rome. These entrancing books (in which, incidentally, Mr. Graves showed that the historical novel need not die) are never for a moment devoid of a salty and often bitter sense of humour. Mme. Yourcenar has no humour at all, and for a good reason. The authoress is in love with her subject. As often happens in love, the outsiders cannot understand the cause of it. She implores us to fall with her for Hadrian. Unalterably he remains by turns an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, and a jealous tyrant.

My learning is not sufficient to allow me to pronounce on the accuracy or otherwise of Mme. Yourcenar's scholarly picture. It is extraordinarily convincing. Only in one particular does she appear to flatter Hadrian. He is represented as having impeccable literary taste, and nothing is heard of the commonly-made accusation against him that this enthroned critic had some ludicrous preferences, underestimating Virgil and Homer with typical "queer" preciosity, and preferring Antimachus of Colophon to either. In this portrait he often refers to the Æneid in unexceptionable fashion, and to the ancient Greek heroes in a way that allows us to suppose a noble delight in the Iliad. Perhaps to depict Hadrian lulling Antinous to sleep by reciting second-rate pedantry to him might be to carry the whole undertaking perilously near to farce, and therefore adjustments are pardonable. On the other hand it may be that Hadrian has been maligned in this matter, but if so, then I think that Mme. Yourcenar ought to have said so in her terminal note on her sources.

IT IS not easy to write the autobiographies of Roman Emperors, particularly of the ones who "deserve the praise rather than the censure of mankind." The thing to be seized about this book is not that it has blemishes but that it excels. The opening chapter in which, by describing his various tastes Hadrian half-consciously describes himself, can rank among superb achievements of the art of description-by-association. In this part of the book Mme. Yourcenar has succeeded in one of the most difficult literary ventures which can be imagined: she has not only given us a convincing picture of a wise man, a testing feat in itself, but she has done this by imagining how he would have described his own wisdom, possibly the most exacting method which she could have chosen. Passages such as this make us forget and forgive less discriminating ones which occur after Mme. Yourcenar has surrendered to her love of her subject.

If it is impossible for most people to delight in this greatest of Roman administrators, it is perhaps equally impossible to hate the man who wrote one of the most pleasing valedictions recorded in all history:

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca

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Pallidula, rigida, nudula;
Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos.

Miss Grace Frick, whose translation is quite admirable throughout, gives us this charming rendering into English:

"Little soul, gentle and drifting, guest and companion of my body, now you will dwell below in pallid places, stark and bare; there you will abandon your play of yore."

Christopher Sykes

THE PAST IN TOTALITARIAN ART

One of the curious relations of today is that between the British intellectual Left and Soviet Russian art and culture, because it has become one of silence—of non- rather than co-existence. For example, in reading the literary and cultural section of the *New Statesman* fairly regularly over some years, I do not remember coming across a single really serious discussion of art or literature in the Soviet Union. There are sound historic reasons for this glaring silence. Unlike the Nazis, the early Bolsheviks before Stalin were not committed to anti-intellectualism; quite the contrary. Still, the time is getting to be rather long ago when one could still square support for the Soviet experiment in politics with an *avant-garde* outlook in the arts—as at those cultural gatherings of the twenties and early thirties where one talked of Gorki and Shostakovich, of Mayakovsky, Pasternak, and Blok, of the Moscow Art Theatre, or perhaps best of all, of the superiority of the Soviet film and the breathtaking crowd scenes of Eisenstein and Pudovkin. It was the faith that not only a more egalitarian society but a greater culture, a truer "people's art," would emerge from the Soviet travail which helped many uneasy Left-wing waverers to accept the censorship and police, the "kulaks" dying like sub-humans on railway stations, the killing off of political opponents, and all the rest.

But what if all the sacrifices were to bring no better Soviet culture, and no art and literature one could look at twice? It is easy to see why this question is evaded on the Left. Yet this is a pity, because it means that the fascinating puzzle of what totalitarian art has become is not discussed by people who might be best qualified to do so. A spate of travellers to Peking *via* Moscow have recently given us their travel pieces. It is sad and significant to note how hurriedly they all dealt with their experience of the Soviet capital, to dwell instead on the beauties of Chinese landscape and art, of Summer Palace and Ming Tombs. Only Sir Hugh Casson seems to have bothered to look into the Moscow art gallery and see a Rembrandt and three Renoirs "fighting for space among the problem pictures of sick children, broken engagements, lost dogs, bereaved fathers, faded blossoms, crumpled letters, plunging gun-teams."

Those gun-teams, those problem pictures, the staggering badness of Soviet art and the naïveté of such literature as is translated—they all explain the embarrassed silence on the Left. But the question which demands explanation is why Soviet totalitarian art should have taken this particular turn. Why should a Revolution which was to point the way to the cultural future have led the way back to the bourgeois culture of the past? For there is less and less doubt of this reversal of direction—to quote Sir Hugh again: "At the hotel the atmosphere is friendly and again indescribably Victorian, with stuffed bears, bronze statuettes, brass spittoons, turkey carpets, high-capped parlour maids. More and more does Moscow in 1954 look like Manchester a century ago."

Soviet novels, reading like 19th century moral tracts, increase this impression. Indeed, the argument that it is quite proper for Soviet culture to pass through its Victorian stage is now sometimes heard in extenuation. Even if Soviet art and literature are hopelessly naïve by our standards, so it is argued, they may be appropriate to a nation still in the midst of its Industrial Revolution, where millions of citizens are for the first time handling machines and reading and writing—in view

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of all this, an element of *parvenu* taste might be expected. But the argument that this "pseudo-Victorianism" is something natural, is, I think, fallacious for several reasons. First, the creation of a 19th century outlook in the mid-20th century is simply not natural. Secondly, Soviet art and literature are not only naïve: they are also always propagandist —and they are so by order. The Soviet "pseudo-Victorianism" of today is, in fact, maintained by a whole apparatus of direction and censorship, and constantly reinforced by a chorus of idiot voices.

IT IS not easy to decide what is more basic in Soviet culture under totalitarianism—the taste for the stuffed bears and bronze statuettes, or this official pæan in their praise, brooking no contradiction. The notion that "pseudo-Victorianism" is natural to Soviet Russia becomes rather more suspect as soon as one looks at the arts under the Nazis. No one could describe the post-Weimar Germany of the thirties as in its Industrial Revolution, or as a nation just learning to read. Yet Dr. Lehmann-Haupt's account, given in his interesting book,* of a comprehensive exhibition of Nazi painting which he saw in 1937 tallies strangely with what Sir Hugh Casson saw in Moscow in 1954:

> What the visitor saw in the exhibition in Munich was exactly the kind of paintings my parents would have looked at in the Glaspalast exhibitions thirty or forty years earlier, on their way through Munich to a holiday in the Bavarian Alps. There were portraits of generals with uniforms studded with decorations, abbots with crosses, romantic seascapes, romantic landscapes, *genre* paintings of 19th century life in the provinces, peaceful cattle grazing among willow trees . . . there were peasants saying their prayers at mealtimes, peasants ploughing, peasants in their Sunday best. . . .

There is surely a common denominator between such Nazi portraits of decorated German generals, and the manifest Soviet liking for photographs and portraits of the decoration-studded barrel chests of Zhukov & Co.; just as there is surely a common denominator linking the Nazi *genre*-paintings of peasants and the Soviet problem-pictures of today. Is there then such a general thing as a totalitarian art—an art which has some curious links with 19th century oleographs? Dr. Lehmann-Haupt's interesting book on German art under Hitler goes a little way to answering this question. It is an uneven book, for although the author is often arresting in his insights, his account of what went on in the world of German art is sketchy. Still, the outline of Nazi totalitarian art which emerges from this and other accounts is significant in its resemblance with what we see in the Soviet Union today.

Different circumstances, of course, limited the resemblance. Hitler never quite achieved Stalin's totalitarian control of society. Until quite late in the war, Germans in circles connected with industry, the *gute Gesellschaft*, and the churches, could with care go their own way—provided they were not Jews. It also made a difference that German artists and writers could emigrate instead of being forced into the totalitarian frame: the Iron Curtain around Nazi Germany was never complete. Then there was the incalculable madness in Nazism, which in retrospect makes Rosenberg's philosophies and Goering's pillaging, Himmler's *Ahnenerbe* and the black market deals of Nazis in "decadent art" seem like a gruesome hoax in history. And yet, as Mr. Lehmann-Haupt shows, the Nazis were as thorough in the sphere of art as in any other. Until the moment when the Allied bombs arrived, a structure of totalitarian Nazi art and culture was being systematically created.

IN writing, there was Goebbels's *Sprachregelung*, the regulation of everything which was to be written in the Third Reich —Newspeakwise. In the arts, one had the National Socialist "Art Chamber" which in 1936 had 42,000 members—15,000 architects, 14,300 painters, 4,200 graphic artists, 2,900 sculptors, and so on. With Jews and *avant-gardists* forced into emigration, and every trend later than Impressionism on the proscribed list, German painting degenerated with surprising ease into pseudo-folk-art, antiquarianism, and especially into a revival of the sort of bucolic *genre*-painting of the Munich-around-1900 school, which one might ascribe to the tastes Hitler had acquired in his provincial youth in Linz, if it were not

**Art Under a Dictatorship.* By HELLMUT LEHMANN-HAUPT. Oxford University Press (Geoffrey Cumberlege). 32s. 6d.

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that something so very like this style is today also met in Moscow under the heading of "socialist realism."

Like the Soviet State, the Third Reich created special opportunities for sculptors to glorify the régime, preferably by way of the straightforwardly idealised and over-life-sized human figure. Mr. Lehmann-Haupt notes how, among many lesser practitioners, German sculptors of name like George Kolbe and Arno Breker slipped over step by step into producing the required figures of German youth in martial poses. The Fuehrer himself had announced that a Græco-Nordic tradition would now come to fruition:

> The new period of today is working on a new type of human being. Tremendous efforts are made in countless fields of life to elevate the people, to make our men, boys, women, and maidens healthier and thereby stronger and more beautiful. From this strength and beauty pours forth a new feeling for life. Never was humanity . . . etc. etc. . . .

Hitler was as insistent that a new art was now to be produced as are the Soviet leaders today. His most favoured sculptor was Professor Joseph Thorak, who turned out gigantic, crude and conventional pieces of sculpture (imitated in the giant figure of a Red Army soldier topping the Soviet monument in Treptow Park, Berlin) usually showing male bodies in aggressive poses. However, the art-form dearest to Hitler and the Nazi régime was clearly architecture. Indeed, it was Hitler's ultimate megalomaniac plan to redesign all Germany in the Nazi image, with every building a monument to the Third Reich. Mr. Lehmann-Haupt points out that if the initial results of the "total architecture" in the Fuehrer's brain were not disastrous, it was because German architecture could still draw on the first-class Weimar tradition, because architecture is evidently not so easy to corrupt as painting or poetry, and thirdly because Albert Speer, the Nazi architectural king and the constructor of the Autobahn, was an effective stage designer of monumental scale, clever and often dignified in his use of space. In the outcome, the brief Nazi era left behind some impressive and efficient public buildings: but also others which foretold the Nazi neo-classicist building nightmare which would have followed, and which would have been a fitting counterpart to the racial cults and to the reality of concentration camps.

On the whole, the Nazi era certainly produced enough evidence to suggest that there *is* such a thing as totalitarian pattern in art. It is not an entirely new pattern. One can recognise some beginnings in the propagandist use of pageant and festival under the French Revolution, and in the employment of artists like David in such pageants. What, fundamentally, is the role of these æsthetics? I think the rough pattern is as follows. First, you have a society forcibly—that is, by force and fabrication—dedicated to some purpose: to establish the political power of the French bourgeoisie, to set up German military hegemony over Europe, or to build up Russia's industries so that Russia will surpass the United States. For these enforced aims the respective rulers have requisite myths—the enshrined popular will, the Germanic master race, the classless society, and these aims are declared to be embodied in the personalities of the rulers. Where the arts are concerned, the actual content of the myth does not seem to matter so much. What matters is, first,

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what is always prohibited. As Mr. Lehmann-Haupt formulates this point:

> Art that is the expression of individual search, of experiment, of intuitive play, art that penetrates the surface of the visual world, that is prophetic, sensitive, apprehensive, art that challenges the individual, that demands concentration, effort, art that heightens perception, sharpens the eye, nourishes thought—that art cannot be tolerated by the dictator. He must eliminate it.

The prohibition of individual challenge really provides the key to totalitarian art—or absence of art. For the above passage might have been more simply summed up in the few words "The dictator must eliminate art." All art, that is. True, the dictatorial régimes have at the same time tried to announce an art of their own. As Mr. Lehmann-Haupt says of the political motivation:

> The dictator must demand art that creates the illusion of a secure, serene world, that hides the sinister motives and the terror. The dictator wants his artists to promote a feeling of belonging. They must promise security through identification with the community; they must glorify the collective aims of the society and propagate complete faith in the methods of the totalitarian leaders.

It is hardly worth pointing out that these aims are unrealisable. Genuine art cannot be based on propositions which most people know to be manifestly untrue. And so the dictatorial demands fail again and again. Both the Hitlerite and the Stalinist experience show that there is *no* new totalitarian art, and this is the whole secret. Architecturally, all you have is a worship of size for its own sake (the German *Autobahn*, the Moscow *Métro*, the East Berlin *Stalinallée*)—and this is all. In painting, you have the attempt to combine art and advertisement, leading back to the worst 19th century superficiality and sentimentality—and also nothing else but that. This is surely the principal reason for the "pseudo-Victorian" look of Moscow today. For totalitarianism creates a complete artistic dead-end. Against Mr. Lehmann-Haupt's comment how, from 1933 onwards, Nazi painting did not advance a single step, one can set the pessimistic conclusion voiced at the last Soviet Writers Congress—that "Soviet literature" simply could not get going.

The totalitarian link with the past has, however, also another important aspect. After all, there was cultural life under Hitlerism just as there is cultural life in the Soviet Union today. But if one looks at it carefully, one sees that what was and is valuable in this life is really the achievement of the past. You have the parallel of the peak occasions: Ulanova dancing in the Russian ballet at a gala performance at the Bolshoi Theatre, with the diplomatic corps present in white ties; or Wagner sung and played at a Nazi gala performance at Bayreuth, with the diplomatic corps equally there. You have the parallel between the excellent performances of, say, Mozart, Goethe, or Kleist under the Nazis, or of Tchaikovsky, Pushkin, and Chekhov in the Soviet Union; and of course you have the parallel stress on "folk-art." And what all this adds up to is simple. In the West, events have made us increasingly aware how much we depend on the cultural heritage of the past. Totalitarianism, which stops creative art dead in its tracks, makes such dependence total.

T. R. Fyvel

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TRANSLATING FROM THE CHINESE

BEAUTIFUL translations are not always true, in spite of Keats. Yet Pound is right to spew on the philologists, as he does in one of his letters. Too often the philologists, who hold the key to the treasure-house, betray their trust by turning the gold into dross. The quarrel about translations between the poets and the philologists is a fairly recent one. Until the 17th century, nearly all English translations were good, perhaps because scholars were more often educated. Nowadays the best translations are often made by poets using cribs or collaborating with somebody who knows the language, as Gerald Bullett did with Tsui Chi in the *Golden Year of Fan Ch'eng-ta*. The best translations of all are by the philologer-poets like Arthur Waley; but such people are rare, and we cannot wait for them to be born.

Inevitably one has to compare Pound's *Classic Anthology** with the Waley translation of the same poems† because, by a coincidence, they are both appearing in the bookshops together. Read as literature, the Waley is delicate, fresh, sensitive. The Pound—hauntingly beautiful, clownishly funny, or just tomfool-silly—is good Pound. What is perhaps more important (since these are translations) is the relationship which each bears to the original.

The original is a collection of songs, ballads, and hymns most of which were ancient when Confucius was born. Not only its language, but the way in which it was written is archaic. This means that the little diagrams were often used, not for the thing they depict, but for a word which once had the same sound. In the course of time the sounds changed and shifted, and eventually the meanings of some of the diagrams could be understood only by phoneticians. Chinese phonology and philology grew out of the study of these songs; and no one who ignores the accumulation of centuries of laborious research in these fields can hope for more than a partial understanding of them.

The trouble with Pound's translations is not that he does not know Chinese (he could certainly use a Chinese dictionary in 1936 when he published Fenollosa's essay), but that a sort of wilful obscurantism prevents him from making proper use of the cribs. Pound derived, from Fenollosa, the half-baked theory that all the parts of a Chinese character are significant in the same way; when, in fact, a majority of the characters contain one element which is used for the sound alone. It is as though in writing English we were to draw an eye to represent "eye," and an eye with a little man beside it to represent "I." To Pound the second symbol would mean, not "I," but "I, the watcher."

A common form in the songs is one in which all the four-line stanzas have the same first and third lines, different second lines, and fourth lines which are identical except at the end of the line, which is changed in order to rhyme with the changing second line. This is a fairly obvious form to use where you have a soloist who can extemporise a bit and a chorus whose memory is rather limited. Some of these songs were, in fact, probably sung in this way, in games or dances, or (like English sea-shanties) as an accompaniment to monotonous labour. Another common feature is a device called *hsing*, whereby some incident in nature is used as a background or refrain to introduce the human incidents of the poem. One finds the same sort of thing in English:

> *Western wind, when wilt thou blow,*
> *The small rain down can rain?*
> *Christ, if my love were in my arms,*
> *And I in my bed again!*

The sixth poem in the Chinese collection contains both these features. It has three four-line stanzas, and each line contains four monosyllabic words. The first stanza, translating as literally as I can, reads:

**Classic Anthology defined by Confucius*. By EZRA POUND. Faber and Faber. 30s.

†*The Book of Songs* (Second Impression). By ARTHUR WALEY. Allen and Unwin. 18s.

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Blooming blooming peach tree
Flowers how flame bright
This girl going to be wed
Put right her room and house.

In the second stanza, line 2 becomes "Also swelling its fruit," and line 4 ends in "house and room" to rhyme with "fruit." In the third stanza, line 2 is "Its leaves glossy thick," and line 4 ends in "house folk" to rhyme with "thick."

Here is Pound's version in full:

O omen tree, that art so frail and young,
so glossy fair to shine with flaming flower;
that goest to wed
and make fair house and bower;

O omen peach, that art so frail and young,
giving us promise of such solid fruit
going to man and house
to be true root;

O peach-tree thou art fair
as leaf amid new boughs
going to bride
to build thy man his house.

This is a very beautiful poem: more memorable, I think, than Waley's much closer version. But several radical changes have been made in the original form. In the first place, no single line is ever repeated. If the original rhyme-scheme is to be kept, it is probably unavoidable that the fourth lines should be altered completely and not simply at their ends. The slightly Pre-Raphaelitish "bower" (suggesting, to my mind, the horns of Elfland, which are totally out of place in a cosy, slap-bottoms, ring-a-roses song of this sort) is to be condoned for the same reason. The peach tree and the bride are identified by Pound, instead of being suggestively juxtaposed as in the original, and this identification is reinforced by the "true root" of the second stanza. This is perhaps a gain, since the Chinese would probably have felt that there was some connexion between the two, and we may not. But what about the omens? The character for "peach-tree" is made up of two elements: one, the symbol for a tree, suggests the meaning; the other, the symbol for the omen-cracks on a heated tortoise-shell, is used as a phonetic (the word for omen-cracks and the word for peach-tree are similar in sound). A Chinese would no more think of omens here than we should think of batsmen

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in the bath if someone mentioned chirping crickets.

But perhaps the discipline of rules, even of half-baked nonsense-rules, can challenge and inspire a poet. Perhaps, since Chinese poetry must lose so much in translation (everything but the bare sense, and sometimes a good deal of that), it can, with advantage, have something added. Those who view the process of subtraction with equanimity cannot reasonably exclaim with horror at the least addition.

There would, I think, have been good arguments for translator's "conceits" of this kind in the 131st poem. This poem, one of the few in the collection which can be dated, is a lament for three young noblemen who followed their dead lord to the grave. Each of the three twelve-line stanzas begins

Gyo, gyo, cries the oriole
As it settles on . . .

There follows the name of a tree: a different tree for each stanza. Each tree-name is a pun. For instance, "mulberry tree" in the second stanza is a pun for "mourning." But Pound's quaint heresy which makes him see word-plays that are not there, makes it impossible for him to detect a pun which really is.

So far this seems to be a fairly harmless sort of hobby-horse. But sometimes its effects are breathtaking. Take the next poem, number 132:

Falcon gone to the gloom
and the long wind of the forest
Forgetting the children I bore you,
North, North? . . .

Translated literally, this first stanza means:

Swoop goes that falcon
Dark is that north wood
Not yet see my lord
Sad heart sore-worried
Or dear, what's to be done?
Really you forget me too much.

The swooping falcon is a fairly obvious sexual image. The singer is clearly a girl longing to see her man. Beyond that a good deal of disagreement is possible. For instance, Waley's fifth and sixth lines read:

What will it be like, what like?
I am sure many will forget me.

making the girl nubile but without experience. But Pound's version is just wrong: a different poem.

This obscurantism is carried to even further lengths. When the method breaks down and produces only Jabberwocky, Pound does not abandon it, but hurls nonsense remorselessly at the heads of his readers.

for flame in the ear, sleep riven,
driven; rift of the heart in the dark
no wine will clear. . . .

For flame in the ear, I should say, no marks at all. The first line means

Restless restless not get to sleep

"Restless" is written with the symbols for "fire" and "ear." But there are other spellings. It can be written with "man" and "dog," or with "fire" and "window." For man in dog-grip, no sleep is given. . . . The images, like phantoms, rise crowding, multiplex. But they are not in the Chinese. It is rather important to know that, I feel. They are produced like the anagrams which Baconian cryptographers extract from Shakespeare.

One of Pound's real contributions as a translator is his knack of feeling for the mood of a poem and setting it in an analogous Western key. It requires a strong nerve, because the pastiche is bound to introduce irrelevant ideas, and most scholar-translators would funk it. But in Pound's hands it sometimes comes off. For instance "Yaller bird" (No. 187), which cries out for a guitar accompaniment, somehow brings out the pathos of the homesick peasant far more successfully than a colourless, "poetic" version would.

The poems which are the worst as translations are usually the smarty ones. In one little jingle, "What's he waiting for? Why doesn't he drop dead?" becomes "Why delay his demise/To clutter hell's gate?" And the corresponding line in the next stanza, "Why doesn't he hurry up and die?" becomes "Why delay his exodus?" This is hopelessly off-key. "Hell's gate" is medieval Christian, and "exodus" would have been a Long Word to the people who made up this rhyme.

Translators should, I feel, be fairly self-effacing people, more anxious for the faithful interpretation and good reception of the original than for their own creative development or greater glory. Though wholly unim-

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pressed by Pound the Confucian, I enjoyed reading these poems immensely. But I should hesitate to describe them all as translations; and I should recommend anyone who is looking for a definitive translation to study the Waley too, and, if he is interested in the technical problems of translation, to glance at the writings of Karlgren.

David Hawkes

A VARIETY OF SATIRE

If, as some of the gloomier literary pundits are insisting, the novel is on its deathbed, here are three Englishmen offering ample proof that at least satire in fiction is as alive, if not so full of lasting kicks, as in the days of Swift and Sterne. It is encouraging, too, to watch each of these writers attacking his world with a different weapon: Mr. Anthony Powell with a quill of exquisite subtlety, Mr. Edward Hyams with every conceivable modern gadget, and Mr. John Wain, who is out to kill at any cost, with a bottle of poisoned brandy or an elbow on the edge of a precipice.

Mr. Powell is not a novelist for the nomadic reviewer. Like Messrs. Cary and Snow, his wind is long, his latest book a continuation of those that have gone before. To do full justice to marathon writers of this rank (which is major), their works or a good library should be at hand. With neither near, it came as a surprise to be confronted so late in *The Acceptance World*,* at an uproariously funny Old Boys Dinner, with the myopic figure of Widmerpool, whom one recognised immediately as that ambitious youth already living by his will, always wearing the wrong kind of overcoat in *A Question of Upbringing*, and in *A Buyer's Market* suffering stoically the humiliation of having his head doused with sugar at a London dance.

Since those comparatively palmy days, Mr. Powell's Old Etonians have grown into men approaching thirty, an age at which "at least some illusions" have been discarded, some wives and husbands exchanged, and some bachelors have found employment in an England overrun by unemployed. As a fleshy member of a City firm whose business it is "to advance money . . . on the strength of reputation," Widmerpool has turned into "a person of authority," Nick Jenkins the detached, ultra-civilised observer, into a budding novelist with a poor memory for putting a name to a familiar face and a predilection for airing his views on art and the opposite sex. With this novel, the third in a series to be known as *The Music of Time*, we enter the Bad Old Days of the Depression, of hunger-marches in Hyde Park, a time when men and women, their minds so recently static or conservative, started succumbing to all kinds of conversion, notably the political, manifested by a swift sliding off to the Left.

The fastest and most surprising slider in that direction was St. John Clarke, the best-selling novelist who, very late in life, while under the influence of his secretary Mark Members, began "plunging headlong into the contemporary world" by allowing himself to be converted to an appreciation of modern art. A move even more unexpected on the part of this elderly bachelor—who, though seldom seen, is really the pivot round whom most of the book's action revolves—is his dismissal of Members for that man's friend, the literary critic J. G. Quiggin: a blunder which Mr. Powell's narrator describes as "a landmark in the general disintegration of society in its traditional form" during those years. From here it needed less verbal persuasion than physical pushing on Quiggin's part to steer the ageing writer in his wheelchair to the head of a demonstration staged to abolish the Means Test. Hyde Park, however, is not the last scene in Clarke's political slide: before the end (at least of this volume) he is shown in the role of a Trotskyist, under the influence of a secretary who, with the name of Guggenbühl (let alone his "English"), one assumes to be a German refugee. As such, as well as with one or two

* *The Acceptance World*. By Anthony Powell. Heinemann. 12s. 6d.

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expressions—to "bore the pants off," for example—is not the author, writing of the very early 1930's, being a trifle premature?

Much of the pleasure of reading Mr. Powell is derived from his increasing ability to be quiet, to understate, never to exaggerate, thus to avoid straining the reader's credulity. To him the story is not the thing: it is the place, the house, the hotel lounge, the prevailing fashion, the people. Moreover, unless my memory is playing me false, his style in this novel seems far more free, less ponderous than that of its predecessor. As *The Music of Time* marches slowly on, the quality of mercy, in one whose earlier fiction has often been called malicious, continues noticeably to grow, and his novels in consequence to have reached that stage in which impartiality and realism combine to fashion a work of enduring value. On the day my nephew asks me to tell him of the England I knew when I was young, I shall bid him read this history—for that is what this admirable novelist is writing.

FROM Mr. Powell to Mr. Hyams is a leap from manners in Mayfair to high jinks in Kent, from the 1930's to this morning's newspaper, from the faintest nudge in the ribs to a resounding wallop on the shoulder. Turning, you will almost certainly be faced by a novelist or journalist. There can surely never have been so many writers in so few books before. In *The Slaughterhouse Informer*,* I have counted at least half-a-dozen. Nor do these include Mr. Hyams's Desmond Rohan-Dermot, one more literary critic whose behaviour bears a remarked resemblance to that of Mr. Powell's Quiggin. (Are *all* critics of literature perpetually in search of a free meal?)

Unlike Quiggin, however, who gave his friends the impression that he slept in his black leather overcoat, Desmond's rolls of fat are invariably encased in clothes designed expressly to attract attention. As the author of *The Sex-Life of Henry James*, with an utter indifference to power and a bottle of *grappa* outside a crowded café in Siena as his ideal of the Good Life, Rohan-Dermot cuts a wildly incongruous figure both among farmers in the cattle market and as the leading spirit behind the transformation of an obscure trade journal into a weekly for the millions. Among his aids in this private enterprise, which owes its success to a bucolic beauty whose best friend is a bull, are a political refugee acting as agent for an American committee holding the belief that only Big Business can "save the United States from the dangers (of a) criminally liberal administration," and—one need hardly say—a famous novelist.

In this fast-and-furious farce with its satire laid on like a powerful hosepipe which occasionally gets blocked, I found the cast of characters too large for the size of the stage, the pace too hot for the eye. I have concentrated on Mr. Hyams's critic because I find him the novel's funniest figure, but his creator seems no less fond of his bookseller, Cartwright, and of Elias Tellifer, the writer-farmer who couldn't make up his mind which gave him the greater pleasure: his own prose or his home-grown wheat. As a result of this diffusiveness, the reader feels as though he were sitting in a circus where too many clowns and acrobats are all performing at once. However, anyone who can create a scene of such hilarity as that in which the obese, overdressed intellectual escorts the "Stourbridge wanton" to a West End *coiffeur* should not be judged too harshly for cramming into some sixty thousand words material enough for a book twice that length.

FOR *Living in the Present** Mr. Wain has been inspired by a good idea which in my opinion he has spoiled by allowing it to run away with him. Indeed, the opposite of what has just been said about *The Slaughterhouse Informer* could be applied with equal justification to *Living in the Present*. The latter story could, and should, have been told in half the number of words. Still, Mr. Wain's is a good story, about a young man who learns—after many vicissitudes which take him from a murky flat in London to Switzerland and Italy—that although "Death destroys a man," it is the idea of life, not death, that saves him.

Edgar Banks, an unsuccessful schoolmaster, is determined to commit suicide because for him the world holds nothing that makes life worth living. Then it occurs to him that to take only *his* life would do the world no

* *The Slaughterhouse Informer*. By EDWARD HYAMS. Longmans, Green. 12s. 6d.

* *Living in the Present*. By JOHN WAIN. Secker and Warburg. 12s. 6d. (To be published on July 21.)

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good; he must therefore take with him some utterly loathsome creature whom the world could do well without. Then and then only could he be happy and free to live in the present. Of all the men Banks disliked there was one whom he detested more than any other. This man, Rollo Philipson-Smith, had a face "expressing in its malignant scowl everything that had for two thousand years been recognised as hateful. . . ." Once a social climber with a self-made reputation as an "esoteric religious poet," Philipson-Smith had grown into a far more sinister figure as a member of some secret "Movement" with international connections.

As Banks was soon to discover, it is one thing to decide to dispose of a man, but quite another to do the disposing. Had he known the difficulty of committing a good clean murder, he would doubtless have tired of the effort long before he had run his enemy (and that man's equally repulsive Scot companion, McWhirtner) to earth in a charming Ticinese hotel. For it was there, with thoughts of fog in Bayswater contrasting with the sun blazing down on Lago Maggiore, that Banks was persuaded "to overhaul the entire strategy" of his decision. It was there, too, that he met a girl called Catherine who—well, never mind about her.

Written with irrepressible gusto, this book is at its best not, I think, when the hero is going through the joys and agonies of deciding just how to kill and die, but when the author is describing scenes in which his main characters, including the fearful Crabshaw family, are all actively involved at once. Here they are in a Swiss restaurant:

> McWhirtner said he wanted a drink, Philipson-Smith asked Edgar what he was doing in Geneva, Edgar asked Mirabelle where she was going to sit, Mrs. Crabshaw said, "Put that down, Roger," Roger said something not fully audible, Mr. Crabshaw cheered wildly, and the waiter shouted, "O.K., Chicago!"

That, too, gives some idea of the tempo of *Living in the Present.*

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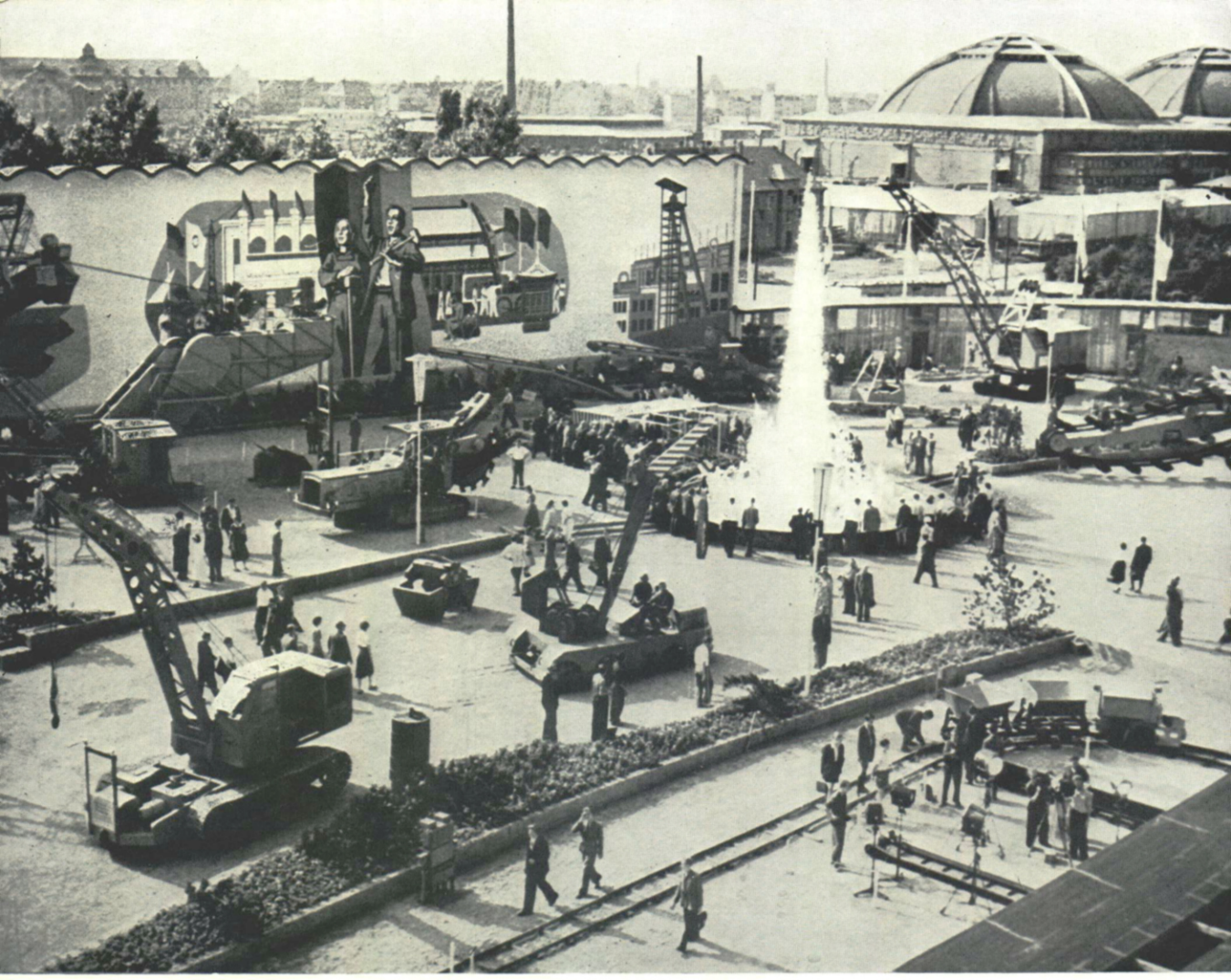

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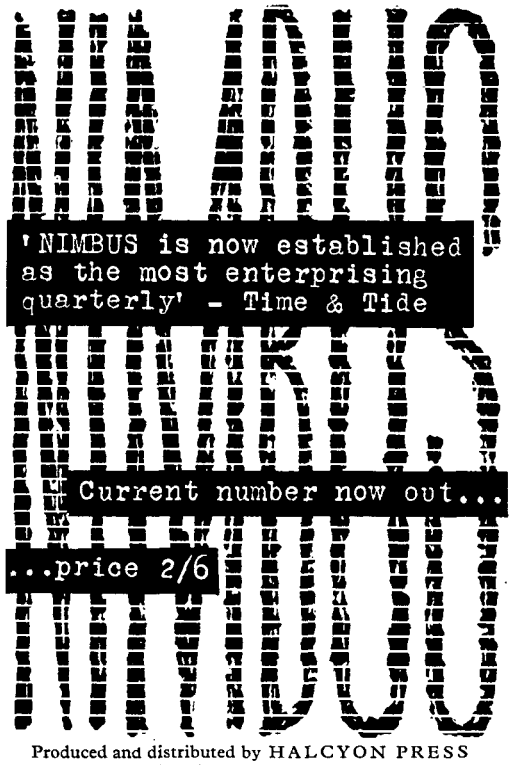

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